

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Executive

5 December 2024

TITLE:	Domestic Abuse Policy
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Fiona Sloman - Executive Councillor for Housing and Licensing
CONTACT OFFICER:	Michelle Costello, Sandra Grain, Maggie Nelson - Housing Strategy Technical Officer, Senior Housing Officer, Interim Head of Housing
WARDS INVOLVED:	ALL

Appendices Attached

Appendix A Domestic Abuse Policy

Appendix B Equality Impact Assessment

- 1. Reason for the Report**
 - 1.1 To share and seek approval of the Domestic Abuse policy (Appendix A).
- 2. Recommendation**
 - 2.1 That the Executive approves the Domestic Abuse Policy.
- 3. Executive Summary**
 - 3.1 Most domestic abuse is perpetrated in the home; housing providers have a significant role in supporting survivors of abuse who are tenants. No one should live in fear of violence or abuse, and we recognise that housing has a significant role within a collaborative response to domestic abuse.
 - 3.2 The Domestic Abuse policy sets out key principles that will ensure a consistent and effective approach in response to reports of, or concerns regarding, domestic abuse relating to High Peak Borough Council tenants, or those living with them. The policy sets out the help and support that will be provided by the Council; identifies support that can be accessed and sets out how we will collaborate with partners to help and support survivors of domestic abuse.

3.3 The policy supports the delivery of our legal and regulatory responsibilities. A domestic abuse policy is required under the new regulatory framework for social landlords introduced in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which came into effect 1 April 2024.

3.4 The objectives of the policy are to:

- Enable individuals to report domestic abuse in different ways, including via a third party.
- Raise awareness about domestic abuse, how to identify it and prioritise the safety of survivors, including children.
- Raise awareness of the support and services available and enable tenants to access appropriate support.
- Provide employees with training and practical guidance to ensure they are, confidently able to recognise the, often subtle, signs of domestic abuse, understand the support that is available and the action they must take.
- Provide timely and effective explanation of options and choices for survivors, so that they can identify the option that best meets the individual's/household's circumstances.
- Liaise and work in partnership with statutory agencies and other relevant local bodies as part of a multi-agency response to keep survivors safe and enable joined up case management.
- Provide a sensitive, non-judgemental, survivor centred approach
- Take appropriate action regarding perpetrators of domestic abuse

3.5 Further areas of work are required and identified in paragraph 7.5 below to Implement the policy.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 This report links to and supports the High Peak Borough Plan (2023- 27) aims, 'Supporting our communities to create a healthier and safer High Peak' and 'Future Proof Housing'.

5. **Alternative Options**

5.1 The Housing Board may request that the policy is redrafted and re-submitted.

6. **Implications**

6.1	<u>Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism</u> There are no specific implications with this report
6.2	<u>Workforce</u> All officers require training in DA at a level appropriate to their role

6.3	<u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u> An Equality Impact Assessment is available Appendix 2.
6.4	<u>Financial Considerations</u> There are no specific implications with this report
6.5	<u>Legal</u> The report sets out legislative and regulatory requirements placed upon authorities through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Consumer Standards.
6.6	<u>Climate Change and Sustainability</u> There are no specific implications with this report
6.7	<u>Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity</u> There are no specific implications with this report
6.8	<u>Consultation</u> Internal consultation
6.9	<u>Risk Assessment</u> There are no specific implications with this report

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**Web Links and
Background Papers**

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7. Introduction/background to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In January 2019, the Government introduced the Domestic Abuse Bill 2017-19 following a consultation on transforming the response to domestic abuse. The legislation was reintroduced in March 2020 as the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-21, and received royal assent on 29 April 2021. The Act established the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and created a long required statutory definition of domestic abuse. Further, it places a duty on local authorities to provide support to the survivors of domestic abuse and their children, for the first time recognising the trauma experienced by the children of those exposed to domestic abuse experiences. Local authorities are also duty bound to grant new secure lifetime tenancies to social tenants leaving existing secure lifetime tenancies for reasons connected with domestic abuse.

7.1a Detail

- 7.1b Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, religious belief, sexuality, disability, wealth, and geography. It has extreme consequences for survivors and generations across an entire range of outcomes, including physical and mental health, substance misuse, homelessness and in extreme cases, domestic homicide, suicide, and death. Most domestic abuse is perpetrated in the home; housing providers have a significant role in supporting survivors of abuse who are tenants. No one should live in fear of violence or abuse, and we recognise that housing has a significant role within a collaborative response to domestic abuse.
- 7.2 The Domestic Abuse policy sets out key principles that will ensure a consistent and effective approach in response to reports of, or concerns regarding, domestic abuse relating to High Peak Borough Council tenants, or those living with them. The policy sets out the help and support that will be provided by the Council, identifies support that can be accessed and how we will collaborate with partners to help and support survivors of domestic abuse.
- 7.3 The policy supports the delivery of our legal and regulatory requirements. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 came into effect 1 April 2024 and introduces a new regulatory framework for social landlords. The new Consumer Standards include the 'Neighbourhood and Community Standard' which requires 'outcomes landlords must deliver about engaging with other parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.'

Specifically, landlords must:

- work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice (s1.4.1)
- have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse (s2.3.1)
- co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority (*Derbyshire County Council*) in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for survivors of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation (2.3.2)

The Consumer Standards Code of Practice provides further guidance (s66-s69). Social housing providers should have a survivor-centred approach and a policy setting out their response to cases of domestic abuse, that includes:

- raising awareness and understanding amongst staff, particularly those linked to a tenant's housing circumstances, so they recognise the signs of domestic abuse
- specialist training for staff supporting tenants
- making tenants aware of appropriate support and advice available regarding domestic abuse, including from third party organisations
- offer referrals to specialist domestic abuse and support agencies
- offer appropriate staff members to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse (i.e. same sex member of staff).

7.4 The objectives of the policy are to:

- Enable individuals to report domestic abuse in different ways, or via a third party.
- Raise awareness about domestic abuse, how to identify it and prioritise the safety of survivors including children
- Raise awareness of the support and services available and enable tenants to access appropriate support.
- Provide employees with training and practical guidance to ensure they are skilled and confident to manage cases, are alert to the signs of domestic abuse, understand the support that is available and the action they must take.
- Provide timely and effective explanation of options and choices for survivors, so that they can identify the option that best meets their individual circumstances.
- Liaise and work in partnership with statutory agencies and other relevant local bodies, as part of a multi-agency response to keep survivors safe and enable joined up case management.
- Provide a sensitive, non-judgemental, survivor centred approach
- Take appropriate action regarding perpetrators of domestic abuse

7.5 Further work will be required to implement the policy, to:

- Raise awareness of support and services available, as outlined s5.1, maintain relevant information on the Councils website and use a range of media tools including newsletters and social media.
- Consider housing application assessment and actions (s5.2)
- Develop a risk-based approach with DASH risk assessment and MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) referral processes (s5.3)
- Consider the processes for recording information on IT systems (as outlined s5.4 and s5.9).
- Consider staff training requirements (s5.2 and s5.11). Domestic abuse awareness, to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and understand the role in dealing with a domestic abuse report or concern. Relevant staff includes those particularly linked to a tenant's housing circumstances and customer facing front line staff. Staff who support tenants experiencing domestic abuse, including Neighbourhood Officers and Housing Advice Officers, will require appropriate specialist training and development.
- Improve the tools and resources available to support survivors, reduce harm and risk of harm. Including consideration of the availability of staff tenancy related support, and the 'Sanctuary Scheme' response which allows and funds the installation of a range of target hardening measures to survivor's property to allow them to choose to remain in their property if they wish to and are safe to do so.

