



homes, communities, cultures

Domestic Abuse Policy (Customers)

Version #:	Date:	Summary of Changes
Version 1	November 2019	Created

1. **Introduction and Scope**

- 1.1 This Policy sets out how Connect will take steps to assist and support anyone experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse, it applies to all customers.
- 1.2 Connect recognises that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. We also recognise that domestic abuse affects both male and female victims, including those in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships. We are committed to supporting victims of domestic abuse regardless of gender or sexuality
- 1.3 As a housing and support provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is absolutely essential that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the person/persons affected to offer support.
- 1.4 We recognise that domestic abuse is prevalent and employees may therefore be impacted by it, we have therefore developed a separate Domestic Abuse Policy for staff.
- 1.5 We will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.
- 1.6 This Policy links to the following:
 - Neighbourly Places Strategy
 - ASB Toolkit
 - Child Protection Policy and Procedure
 - Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure
 - Starter Tenancy Policy and Procedure
 - Domestic Abuse Policy (Staff)
 - Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy and Procedures
 - Lettings Policy and Lettings Procedure
 - Support Services Strategy
 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement

2. **Definition**

2.1 The Home Office (March 2013) defines domestic abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse... by someone who is or has been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality”.

Examples of domestic abuse include Psychological; Physical; Sexual; Financial; Emotional; as well as so called ‘honour’ based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

2.2 Controlling behaviour is defined as: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

2.3 Coercive behaviour is defined as: “an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim”.

3. **Connect Policy Statement**

3.1 We believe no one should live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner or any other member of their household.

3.2 We will treat everyone we come across who is experiencing domestic abuse in a supportive and non-judgemental way.

3.3 **We will:**

- Enable residents to report domestic abuse to us in different ways; and
we respond to all reports we receive, including those made in confidence, and those made by individuals not directly involved such as neighbours and contractors.

- Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate services as early as possible and are given advice to allow them to make choices about what to do next.
- Support people who are / have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- Ensure that where children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too have access to services as early as possible.
- Carry out safety planning to provide support for the person experiencing domestic abuse and their children where present. Unless we are informed that another organisation has carried this out, we will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH).
- Support victims to employ the use of civil and criminal laws which can offer them protection and also act as a preventative measure to avoid further abuse.
- Recognise the housing needs of women and men who need to move because of domestic abuse.
- Seek appropriate support solutions for perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent abuse recurring.
- Follow Connect's Child Protection procedures if a child is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
- Follow Connect's Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure if a vulnerable adult is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
- Provide a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance in cases of domestic abuse. For cases which meet the threshold of a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), or if we have safeguarding concerns, we have a legal duty to share information with relevant agencies, such as Social Services.
- Provide support and guidance to employees experiencing domestic abuse (see separate Staff Domestic Abuse Policy).
- Not tolerate domestic abuse from our employees, though we will always signpost perpetrators to support.
- Ensure staff receive training on domestic abuse.
- Work closely with appropriate agencies in all areas that we operate on relevant strategies to tackle domestic abuse.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Overall responsibility and accountability for this Policy lies with Director of Neighbourly Places.
- 4.2 Compliance with this Policy is the responsibility of all Connect staff.
- 4.3 Connect's specialist domestic abuse staff will provide support and guidance to staff in relation to the operation of this Policy, as will members of Connect's internal safeguarding group.
- 4.4 Connect's specialist domestic abuse staff will represent Connect at MARAC in Kirklees; Community Housing Officers and Engage Leeds staff will represent Connect at MARAC in Leeds.

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 The practical operation of this Policy will be kept under review by Connect's internal safeguarding group.
- 5.2 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in line with business needs or changes in regulation and/or legislation. Any changes to the Policy will be considered by the Service Improvement Forum before being considered by Connect's Leadership Team for final approval.