

Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure

Version: 2

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1. Introduction

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.

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

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.

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 colleagues.

We will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.

This Policy links to the following:

- Neighbourly Places Strategy
- Housing Support Wellbeing and Health Strategy
- ASB Toolkit
- Child Protection Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure
- Starter Tenancy Policy and Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Policy (Colleagues)
- Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy and Procedures
- Lettings Policy and Lettings Procedure
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement

2. Definition

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological

- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is: 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.

Coercive behaviour is: 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.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

3. Connect Policy Statement

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

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

We will:

- Enable residents to report domestic abuse to us in different ways. 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 Colleague Domestic Abuse Policy).
- Not tolerate domestic abuse from our employees, though we will always sign post perpetrators to support.
- Ensure colleagues 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

Overall responsibility and accountability for this Policy lies with Director of Neighbourly Places. Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of all Connect colleagues.

Connect's specialist domestic abuse team will provide support and guidance to colleagues in relation to the operation of this policy, as will members of Connect's internal safeguarding group.

Connect's specialist domestic abuse team will represent Connect at MARAC in Kirklees; Community Housing Officers and Engage Leeds colleagues will represent Connect at MARAC in Leeds.

Where a Managing Agent provides housing management on behalf of Connect, the Managing Agent should comply with this policy, unless a specific agreement has been made to follow an alternative policy. Incidents should be reported to Connect in line as required by contract. Support is available from Connect if required.

5. Monitoring and Review

The practical operation of this policy will be kept under review by Connect's internal safeguarding group.

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.

6. Procedure

All colleagues procedure:

In the event where a person is in immediate danger call 999

Ensure that any disclosure or incident of domestic abuse within a Connect Housing property or from any customer affiliated to Connect Housing is fed back to your line manager to agree what action to take. Complete a safeguarding log on the internal safeguarding hub. Refer to the Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure and the Child protection Policy and Procedure where children are involved for guidance. The line manager will usually refer immediately to the appropriate Housing Support Coordinator (HSC), Housing Support Worker (HSW) or Community Housing Officer (CHO).

It is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure the referral is made and received, usually by phone or Teams call – a record on the safeguarding hub alone is not a referral.

CHO's and Wellbeing & Support procedure:

After the initial report from any colleague, cases will usually be dealt with by the HSC's, HSW's or CHO's.

For all disclosure/incidents of domestic abuse:

- Refer all names of Kirklees customers to North Kirklees Women's Refuge who can check with MARAC and support you with safeguarding.
- Complete a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based violence) form with the customer.

If the score is 14+ on the DASH form, if the disclosure contains information that includes abuse with weapons, strangulation, stalking, threats to kill or, where the score is under 14 but professional judgement concludes that it is high risk then complete a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) referral form.

If the score is under 14, medium or low risk, continue to follow the procedure below without completing a MARAC referral.

DASH/MARAC Referral Links:

Please use the links below to access DASH and MARAC referral forms.

Kirklees:

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/adult-social-care-providers/multi-agency-risk-assessment-conference.aspx>

Leeds:

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/domesticviolence/maracs>

Wakefield:

wakefield.marac@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk : email for support to refer.

Calderdale:

DASH: <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/sites/default/files/dash-risk-assessment.pdf> MARAC:

<https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/sites/default/files/marac-referral.pdf>

For further guidance, contact NKWR (Kirklees) who can offer further risk information from MARAC and also offer guidance on referrals.

- If there are children present / within the household inform children's social care. This should usually be done with the parent's permission and being informed of the referral UNLESS this would put a child at risk. See Child Protection Policy and Procedure for guidance.
- If the victim is a vulnerable adult refer to adult safeguarding. A vulnerable adult at risk is anyone aged 18 and over who is not able to care for or protect themselves from harm or exploitation. It might be because of mental health, disability, age, or illness. See safeguarding adult's policy for guidance.
- A safeguarding log on the internal safeguarding hub should be completed within 24 hours and should then be followed through with safeguarding updates and outcomes.
- Support customer to report incident to the police should they choose to report it.
- Complete or renew the customer's risk assessment whenever a new incident occurs or where the risk has changed.
- Record a marker on QLX/CRM if there is risk to colleagues visiting a property/domestic abuse has been disclosed (this is done by emailing HLO's).
- Offer support by referral to local domestic abuse service / local safeguarding unit/ national helpline numbers.

Information Sharing:

Wherever possible we will aim to gain consent before sharing personal information with third parties. However sometimes circumstances mean that we are unable to do so. Information sharing with agencies such as the Police, HM Courts & Tribunal Services and Social Services is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Connect Housing may share information with these agencies without seeking consent, for example concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable adults, certain types of criminal activity or health and safety hazards.

Please see the Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy and Procedure for further guidance.

Guidance:

Dealing with disclosures:

- Listen and be non-judgemental.
- Don't investigate the incident, you can only advise and support the customer.

- Don't contact the customer's family especially in suspected honour based violence incidents.
- Connect recognise that dealing with domestic abuse disclosures can be difficult; you can find support from you line manager and the Employee Assistance scheme.
- Be realistic and honest about the limits of confidentiality.
- Let them know that domestic abuse is never acceptable.
- When supporting customers who have experienced domestic abuse, it is important to acknowledge that each situation is different and therefore will require a person centred approach whereby we can advise and support the customer to make their own choices.

If customer chooses to leave the relationship AND the property:

- Contact NKWR to check available refuge space throughout the UK (0192 446 5238)
- Contact Women's Aid for domestic abuse advice and support
- Contact Refuge for domestic abuse advice and support
- Provide customer with National domestic abuse helpline number
- Contact or advise customer to attend Housing Options
- Contact or advise customer to meet with a family law solicitor for legal advice regarding non molestation orders, child access arrangements orders etc.
- Refer customer to support service for domestic abuse if further support is needed
- Refer customer to IDVA (independent Domestic Violence Advisor) if they require support with regards to domestic abuse.
- Support customer to create a safety plan <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/making-a-safety-plan/>

If customer chooses to stay in relationship:

- Provide customer with National domestic abuse helpline number
- Support customer to complete a Claire's Law disclosure request by calling the police on 101 for the customer to be able to acquire historical risk information.
- Refer customer to support service for domestic abuse if further support is needed
- Support customer to create a safety plan <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/making-a-safety-plan/>

If customer ends relationship but stays at the property:

- Contact or advise customer to meet with a family law solicitor for legal advice regarding non molestation orders, child access arrangements orders etc.
- Refer customer to support service for domestic abuse if further support is needed
- Refer and support customer to Sanctuary or target hardening schemes to secure the property. If they are a general needs tenant, contact the Community Housing Officer.
- Provide customer with National domestic abuse helpline number
- Refer customer to an IDVA service (independent Domestic Violence Advisor) if they require support with regards to domestic abuse.

- Support customer to create a safety plan <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/making-a-safety-plan/>

If the customer/tenant is a perpetrator:

- Customer can be referred, on their request, to local perpetrator support and advice. (Direct work with a perpetrator of domestic abuse should only be undertaken by a specialist in this area.)
- Refer customer to 'I need help to stop' helpline for perpetrators
- Record any risks QLX
- Complete a risk assessment and refer to Lone Working Policy and Procedure as risk for colleagues may be heightened.
- Complete an internal safeguarding report after an incident of domestic abuse.

If the customer is in a Connect property, then there are a number of options available when dealing with the tenancy agreement and property rights. The officer dealing with the disclosure can contact the relevant Community Housing Officer to discuss.

For further advice and guidance you can access information from:

- North Kirklees Women's Refuge 0192 446 5238 Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline 24h: 0808 2000 247
- Connect Housing Safeguarding/Domestic Abuse Lead: Director of Neighbourly Places
- Connect Housing Domestic Abuse champions: North Kirklees Women's Refuge
- Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership for support and sanctuary scheme (Kirklees) 24h: 0800 052 7222
- Leeds Domestic Violence Service (domestic abuse and sanctuary advice) 24h: 0113 246 0401
- Wakefield Domestic Abuse Service (domestic abuse and sanctuary advice): 0800 915 1561
- Calderdale Staying Safe Service (domestic abuse and sanctuary advice): 0142 232 3339
- NCDV (injunction referral service): <https://www.ncdv.org.uk/>
- RESPECT (male service for perpetrators and victims) Tel: 0808 802 4040 Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm.
- Galop (LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline): 0800 999 5428
- Karma Nirvana (BAME): <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/contact/>
- For perpetrators: 'I need help to Stop' Tel: 0784 939 8711

Appendix:

A: Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
1	November 2019	Original. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years in line with Connect's governance framework.
2	November 2021	Format updated- new Connect branding