

1. Background and objectives

- 1.1. At Alliance Homes we believe that our customers and colleagues should live in safety, free from harm. Domestic Abuse can destroy households and severe cases lead to loss of life. Housing can be a key barrier in escaping a cycle of abuse and the Social Housing White Paper (2021 version onwards) sets out a clear role for social landlords in tackling this issue.
- 1.2. This policy sets out our approach to supporting customers and colleagues affected by Domestic Abuse, specifically:
 - Our organisational approach to reducing the impact of Domestic Abuse for our customers.
 - How we will respond to a disclosure of Domestic Abuse by a colleague.
 - Training and awareness raising to enable all colleagues to identify signs of potential abuse.
 - How we will work in partnership with others to tackle Domestic Abuse within our areas of operation.
- 1.3. Our approach to dealing with direct customer reports of Domestic Abuse is contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and the specific Domestic Abuse Case Management and Support Procedure.
- 1.4. Our overarching approach to safeguarding adults and children who are at risk within our properties is contained within our Safeguarding Policy.

2. Definitions & Legislative Context

- 2.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a statutory definition of Domestic Abuse:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.’

- 2.2. Domestic abuse can take different forms, including:

- Physical abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Financial abuse.
- Coercive control and gaslighting / emotional abuse.
- Digital / online abuse.
- So-called ‘honour-based’ violence.
- Forced marriage.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM).

- 2.3. The 2021 Act extended the definition to include children who have witnessed the abusive behaviour as victims, however any concerns for the safety of children within a household will still be addressed through the relevant organisational and local Safeguarding Policies.

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2.4. The following legislation is relevant to and informs this Policy and the approach of Alliance Homes:

- Housing Act 1996
- Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children Act 2004
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Anti-Social Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) 2014
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

3. Supporting Customers

3.1. Where a customer reports Domestic Abuse to us directly we will manage the case in accordance with our Domestic Abuse Case Management and Support Procedure, ensuring that the police and other relevant partners are informed (so far as this is agreed and felt to be safe for the customer).

3.2. Colleagues may also become aware of Domestic Abuse through other customer interactions and disclosures or may suspect that Domestic Abuse is taking place within a customer's home. In such situations colleagues should report this information to the Anti-Social Behaviour team in the first instance.

3.3. Measures that Alliance Homes may take in reducing the risk of harm to customers who are experiencing Domestic Abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Fitting of enhanced security measures to properties
- Agreeing to a Direct Let to move a customer within our own stock urgently
- Facilitating emergency housing of a customer fleeing Domestic Abuse from another area in conjunction with the relevant Local Authority holding duty
- Providing advice and support to engage with relevant specialist organisations
- Providing financial support to allow emergency moves (for example deferring rent or arrears payments for a short period)

4. Supporting Colleagues

- 4.1. This policy applies equally to colleagues and customers. Domestic Abuse can affect anyone, at any time in life, and Alliance Homes is committed to providing a safe and supportive workplace to colleagues.
- 4.2. Colleague disclosures of existing or historic Domestic Abuse will be treated sympathetically and confidentially, whether this is to a line manager or colleague.
- 4.3. All colleagues should have the basic knowledge to offer relevant information and signposting to a colleague making a disclosure (see Section 5). In more serious or complex cases (and with colleague consent) information may be passed to the Alliance Homes Domestic Abuse Leads (Tenancy Sustainability Manager or Assistant Manager – ASB) to offer more in-depth advice and referral routes.
- 4.4. In line with Alliance Homes approach to agile working, Real Conversations should take place in person wherever possible and should regularly evaluate the colleagues home working situation for any personal safety or wellbeing concerns.
- 4.5. Measures Alliance Homes may take to support colleagues, both directly following a disclosure and more broadly, can include:
 - Use of Employee Assistance Programme
 - Information on local and national support agencies on Intranet and Website
 - Risk assessments relating to their work role, travel or home working arrangements
 - Leave and flexible working arrangements to support the situation
 - Altered working patterns/hours/location
 - Use of offices as safe and secure spaces to meet with support organisations

Support actions will be agreed with, and co-ordinated by, the HR team.

5. Training and Awareness

- 5.1. Equipping colleagues with the knowledge and awareness to identify signs of Domestic Abuse and respond to disclosures is the most effective way of supporting our customers and colleagues.
- 5.2. We will offer a specific E-Learning module on Domestic Abuse that is available to all colleagues.
- 5.3. We will publicise local and national initiatives both internally to colleagues and externally to our customers.
- 5.4. We will make leaflets and publications regarding local and national support services available in our offices.

- 5.5. Colleagues will receive periodic training and awareness sessions in one of three tiers based on their role:
- Generic – a basic awareness that will allow for accurate signposting and referral
 - Front-Line – knowledge to identify Domestic Abuse, respond appropriately to a disclosure and provide housing-related advice
 - Caseworker – knowledge to manage a Domestic Abuse report, work directly with specialist support agencies and represent Alliance in multi-agency forums

6. Working in Partnership

- 6.1. Alliance Homes will take an active role in local, regional and national networks that aim to reduce the impact of Domestic Abuse.
- 6.2. We will actively attend and chair (on a rotation basis) the North Somerset MARAC, the ASB Steering Group and OneTeam partnership, all of which will jointly work to support victims, and manage perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.
- 6.3. We will benchmark our Domestic Abuse policies and procedures against best practice, utilising local specialist services (such as NextLink) as a “critical friend” and comparisons with other housing providers through the DAHA group (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance).

7. Monitoring, consultation, and review

- 7.1. The impact of this policy will be monitored through the following measures:
- Monitoring the volume, outcome and lessons learned from each Domestic Abuse case managed through our ASB service (reported monthly through ASB Performance report)
 - Volume of emergency Domestic Abuse allocations we facilitate each year (reported quarterly via allocations reports)
 - Number of colleagues appropriately trained in Domestic Abuse awareness (reported quarterly via L&D training records)
- 7.2. The Tenancy Sustainability Manager is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.
- 7.3. Owners of related policies (as referenced in Section 9) will be expected to assess the impact of any policy change in their area on Alliance Homes ability to support and work with those affected by Domestic Abuse.
- 7.4. This policy will be reviewed within three years of its approval date.

8. Equality and diversity

- 8.1. This policy is subject to a periodic Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

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- 8.2. The purpose of such an assessment is to consider the effect of the policy regarding the recognised protected characteristics of equality and ensure that it does not unfairly impact any individual or group. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy and Single Equality Scheme. Remedial action will be undertaken if a detrimental effect is identified.
- 8.3. The EIA also requires the policy author to consider whether the policy is likely to negatively impact on a person's Human Rights.
- 8.4. This policy and any other related Alliance Homes publications can be provided in other formats for those with visual, literacy or language difficulties.

9. Associated documents

- 9.1. Reference should be made to the following internal documents when reading this policy:
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Lettings Policy
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Health & Safety at Work Policy
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure
 - Tenancy Management Procedure
 - Alliance Homes Code of Conduct
 - Domestic Abuse Case Management and Support Procedure

10. Version control and approval dates

| Approval stage | Date completed |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Equality Impact Assessment completed | 30 th November 2022 |
| EIA reviewed by specialist colleague within HR | 5 th December 2022 |
| SLT review / approval | 19 th January 2023 |
| Board or Committee approval | N/A |

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| Next review date | January 2026 |
|------------------|--------------|

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment must be conducted alongside the review of an existing policy or the creation of a new one.

1. Name the Strategy, Policy, Procedure or Function (SPPF) being assessed and name of author.

Domestic Abuse Policy – Phil Carroll, Tenancy Sustainability Manager

2. Aims of the SPPF being assessed.

- *Whose need is it designed to meet?*
- *Are there any measurable elements such as time limits or age limits?*

The aim of this policy is to ensure that we offer timely advice and assistance to customers, and colleagues suffering domestic violence and abuse. This policy is intended to be safety focussed and supportive rather than punitive.

3. Who has been consulted in developing the SPPF?

- *Make reference or links to consultation/evidence documents*

Kate Meyler, North Somerset Manager, NextLink Housing
Michelle Harper, Tenancy Services Manager
Andy Perry, HR Business Partner

4. Does the SPPF promote equality of opportunity?

The policy and the benefits it seeks to realise apply equally to customers and colleagues and the diverse groups within each of these headings. The services framed by this policy are accessible to all and we will work with local agencies where necessary to ensure there are no barriers to access that are driven by protected characteristics (for example working with SARI to break down service accessibility issues with race or ethnicity at their root)

5. Identify potential impact on each of the diversity “groups” by considering the following questions (the list is not exhaustive but an indication of the sort of questions assessors should think about):

- *Might some groups find it harder to access the service?*
- *Do some groups have particular needs that are not well met by the current SPPF?*

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- What evidence do you have for your judgement (e.g. monitoring data, information from consultation/research/feedback)?
- Have colleagues/residents raised concerns/complaints?
- Is there local or national research to suggest there could be a problem?

| Protected Characteristic | No impact | Negative impact | Positive impact | Information source/s ** | Comments/evidence |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Race | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | Those of a mixed racial origin were more likely to be victims of Domestic Abuse (7.6%) than those from white (5.7%), black (3.7%), or Asian (3.6%) ethnic backgrounds |
| Disability | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | Adults aged 16 to 74 years with a disability were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those without (11.8% compared with 4.6%), and women with a disability were even more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year (14.7%) ⁸⁰ . For disabled men, the estimated prevalence was 7.5%. |
| Gender | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | 67% of adults who have experienced Domestic Abuse since the age of 16 are female, when considering cases of Domestic Abuse that end in criminal prosecutions the % of female victims increases to 89%. Alliance Policy will be geared to |
| Transgender | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 / Safelives – It’s Free to be Safe Report (2018) | No official crime figures are currently calculated relating to DA reports within the Transgender community. However SafeLives research suggested that up to 80% of transgender individuals had experienced some form of abuse in their adult lives |
| Sexual orientation | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | Bisexual adults aged 16 to 74 were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year |

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| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| | | | | | (15.2%) than gay or lesbian (8.4%), or heterosexual or straight adults (5.2%) |
| Religion or belief | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | Those reporting their religion as Buddhist or an 'Other' religion not listed (10% and 9% respectively) were more likely to report domestic abuse within the last year. This compares to 6% of those with no religion, 5% of Christians, 4% of Muslims, and 3% of Hindus |
| Age | | | X | Crime Survey for England & Wales 2020 | Domestic Abuse is more prevalent, regardless of gender, amongst younger people with the 16-19 age group the most affected (14% of female reports and 5.3% of male reports) |
| Marriage & Civil Partnership | X | | | | There is no specific data that indicates there is a greater propensity of Domestic Abuse within Marriage or Civil Partnership |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | X | | | | There is no specific data that indicates there is a greater propensity of Domestic Abuse relating to Pregnancy/Maternity situations |
| Rural issue | X | | | | There is no firm data to suggest that rural households are more likely to suffer Domestic Abuse, however our service procedures are mindful of the fact that they can be more isolated from colleagues visibility and support services which tend to be focused on more urban areas |
| Social mobility | X | | | | There is no specific data that indicates there is a greater propensity of Domestic Abuse based on the Social Mobility of the household involved |

Was there a negative impact identified in question 5? No

6. If "negative impact" identified in table (4) above is it?

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Legal -

What is the level of impact? -

| | |
|------|-----|
| YES | NO |
| HIGH | LOW |

If it is not legal and/or high impact – (i.e.: if you have highlighted NO to legal and HIGH to impact, then the document should be referred to Head of HR)

7. If positive impact has been identified in table 4 above, how can it be improved upon or maximised, either in this SPPF or others?

Positive impacts can be maximised by utilising partnerships with organisations who can assist with communications and awareness raising of Alliance services to the groups referenced

8. Full EIA (or if you decide full EIA is not necessary but some changes should be considered)

- *Are there changes you could introduce which would make this SPPF work better for this group of people?*
- *Is further research or consultation required?*

9. Does this proposal have any potential Human Rights implications?

If yes, please describe (if necessary, please refer to the Alliance Homes Group Human Rights Policy)

This policy meets the requirements of Article 14, Prohibition of discrimination, ensuring that all customers have equal access to service delivery, regardless of a protected characteristic.

It also meets the requirement of Article 8, respect for family life and home, by ensuring that we provide a tailored, fair and consistent approach to our customers.