



Domestic Abuse Policy

1. Policy

This policy sets out how North Devon Homes' (NDH) will support customers suffering domestic abuse as well how it will promote awareness of the issue to its staff and customers.

It sets out :

- What we mean by domestic abuse
- How we will support victims of domestic abuse
- How we will promote awareness

2. Purpose

For the purposes of this policy the term domestic abuse is used to refer to all incidents of domestic abuse and violence.

The Home Office defines domestic violence as:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'

The policy sets out the type of response that a victim of domestic abuse can expect from NDH. This approach incorporates the good practice standards set out in the Devon- wide protocol agreed by all Housing Associations

3. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent
- It will reflect the current standards of operation and will be reviewed whenever industry standards, legislation or guidelines change
- It will reflect the Company's staff, customer and Board members views
- It will promote consistency in the approach to dealing with domestic abuse
- Our response to victims of domestic abuse will be monitored through our published Anti Social Behaviour service standards

4. Review

We will review this policy at least once every 3 years to ensure that it continues to operate within best practice, achieve measurable results, and achieve continuous service improvement.

Alternatively, the policy and all associated procedures will be reviewed immediately following any relevant change to government policy, regulation or legislation.

The Neighbourhoods Manager will be responsible for ensuring that policy reviews are undertaken, that appropriate consultation takes place and that revisions are reported to the Board for its approval.

5. Application

North Devon Homes' Board will approve this policy and delegate responsibility to the Neighbourhoods Manager for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

The Neighbourhoods Manager will provide training for staff to ensure that they fully understand the wider issues surrounding this policy and the procedure.

6. Policy Statement

North Devon Homes' Board will delegate responsibility to the Neighbourhoods Manager for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

Procedures for dealing with Domestic abuse is included as part of the ASB procedures maintained by the Neighbourhood Services Team in line with this policy to provide further guidance during delivery of this service.

a) Training and awareness promotion

We will:

- Provide awareness training to all operational staff
- The Neighbourhoods Manager will be appointed as Domestic Abuse Champion to both promote awareness and ensure best practice is adopted
- We will provide specialist training to key staff
- Provide information to customers to promote awareness
- The Neighbourhoods Manager will attend monthly MARAC meetings to ensure awareness and working with other agencies to best tackle high level cases in the area

b) Joint working

To ensure a consistent approach is offered to victims the joint protocol

that has been developed will be applied to all RSLs operating within the Devon area.

This will include working with the local authority to meet their homelessness duties and wherever possible prevent victims being made homeless as a result of domestic abuse.

c) Confidentiality, sharing of information & disclosures

We will ensure that the highest standards of confidentiality are maintained in order to ensure the safety and well being of both victims and staff.

Any information disclosed will be treated in the strictest confidence and comply with the agreed protocols set out in Appendix 1.

NDH will take a victim-centred approach to incidents of domestic abuse and tailor responses according to the needs and wishes of the victim. We will be sensitive to diverse needs of victims and children considering their age, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or marital status.

7. Implementation

The Neighbourhood Manager will ensure that this policy is communicated and implemented.

The Neighbourhoods Manager will ensure the monitoring and review of this policy.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 Who has been consulted in developing the Policy?

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge/impact/result

8.2 Identify potential impact on each of the diversity “groups”

Strand	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Comments / evidence
Race				
Disability				
Gender				
Gender Reassignment				
Sexual orientation				
Religion or belief				
Age				
Rural issues				

Social Inclusion issues				
Pregnancy and maternity				
Marriage and civil partnership				

7.3 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

N/A

7.4 If “adverse impact” identified in the table above, please state how this policy addresses this.

N/A

7.5 A full EIA is not required for this policy.

7.6 If suggestions for improvement have been suggested, what should the positive outcome be for North Devon Homes’ customers and stakeholders?

xxx

Next review date	
Every three years Next review date: October 2019	
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Summary of Procedure and Service

Scope

This covers any occupant of a property owned by NDH who reports domestic abuse to us and should be read in conjunction with the good practice guide produced by the Devon Strategic Housing group.

Initial support

We will take a victim-centred approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse and will be guided by the victim in determining the most appropriate course of action to take.

All victims of domestic violence will be offered an interview within 24 hours after receipt of the report. This interview can be with a member of staff of the same sex if preferred.

Interviews will be carried out in a sympathetic and supportive manner. The victim will be assured of confidentiality and can be accompanied by friend or relative if they so wish.

We will advise them of possible options available and then be guided by the victim's preferred course of action. This may include:

- additional support being offered
- enhanced security measures or
- the legal options available both personal & relating to the tenancy

If the victim is in agreement we will contact other agencies, such as the police; the local authority; women's refuge and local legal services on their behalf.

Accommodation

If the victim is unable to return home we will contact the relevant agency, regarding the provision of temporary accommodation. in conjunction with other agencies we will work with the victim and if they wish to remain in their home we will arrange with those agencies for additional security measures to be provided. These may could some of the following:

An emergency alarm
Additional or replacement window and door locks
Replacement external door(s) or
Installation of a "sanctuary scheme" measures

The changing of locks will be carried out under an emergency repair basis and will be completed within 24 hours. Other works will take longer to carry out and may rely on other agencies to supply.

We will where deemed appropriate apply for Band A on dhc for a priority move out of the area or adirect match for our stock if supported by other agencies.

If the victim is either a joint tenant or the partner of the tenant we will change the locks where this is supported by a court order or by the Police.

Legal advice / Tenancy options

a) Sole tenant

Where the victim is the sole tenant and they are unable to return to their home we will, with their approval, work with other agencies to obtain a court order requiring the perpetrator to leave and prevent them from returning to the property. When the victim returns to their home we can provide additional security measures where required.

b) Joint tenant

Where the victim is a joint tenant and they are unable to return to their home we will, with their approval, work with other agencies to obtain a court order requiring the perpetrator to leave and prevent them from returning to the property. If the perpetrator is the other joint tenant we will seek a court order, with any other agencies involved, to have the tenancy put into the victim's sole name.

c) Partner of a tenant

Where the victim is the partner of the tenant (ie they are not on the tenancy agreement) and they are unable to return to the property, we will, with their approval, work with other agencies to obtain court order to have the partner removed from the property. The approach taken will be dependent on the circumstances of each case and whether there is multi- agency support for this approach. For example this may be appropriate where the victim is likely to gain residency of any dependent children.

Longer term support

The victim maybe willing to remain in their home on a temporary basis with support provided, pending a move to alternative accommodation. Where this approach is supported by other agencies we will request that they are placed in a high priority or emergency banding by the local authority so as to enhance their chances of a move via Devon Home Choice.

If the victim wishes to move away from Devon we will seek to agree reciprocal arrangement with the appropriate local authority or housing association.