



## **Domestic Abuse Policy**

# CONTENTS

## Page

1.	Purpose	2
2	Principles	3
3	Review	3
4.	Responsibilities	3
5	Scope	4
6	Policy Statement	4
7	Implementation	5
8	Equality Impact Assessment	5
Appendix 1:	Summary of Procedure and Service	7

# 1 Purpose

This policy sets out how North Devon Homes' (NDH) will support customers suffering from domestic abuse as well as 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

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse.

'Abusive behaviour' is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and 'personally connected'.

'Personally connected' is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

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.

## 2 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, customers 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.

## 3 Review

We will review this policy at least once every two 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 Community Services 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.

## 4 Responsibilities

North Devon – Executive Team will approve this policy and delegate responsibility to the Community Services Manager for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

The Community Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented and that staff are suitably trained to ensure they fully understand the wider issues surrounding this policy and the procedure

The Community Services Manager is responsible for monitoring and review of this policy.

## 5 Scope

This policy applies to North Devon Homes, including any of its subsidiary companies (collectively referred to as the 'Company').

## 6 Policy Statement

Procedures for dealing with Domestic abuse is included as part of the ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) procedures maintained by the Neighborhood 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 Community Services 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 Neighbourhood's Team Leader will attend MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) 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 Registered Providers 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 and 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, summary of procedure and service.

NDH will take a victim-centered 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 Consultation

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge / impact / result

## 8 Equality Impact Assessment

### 8.1 Who has been consulted in developing the Policy?

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				

### 8.2 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

N/A

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

N/A

**8.4 A full EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) is not required for this policy.**

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

<b>Next review date:</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
Every two years.  January 2025	Head of Customer and Housing Services
<b>Author</b>	<b>Related Documents</b>
	Appendix 1 – Summary of Procedure and Service

# Appendix 1: 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. [Strategy for delivering domestic abuse support in safe accommodation - Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

### 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 face to face support as a priority following receipt of the report. This can be with a member of staff of the same sex if preferred.

All contact 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 at a mutually convenient time and place

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

- signposting to SPLITZ/ NDADA (North Devon Against Domestic Abuse)
  - other 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 / men's refuge and local legal services on their behalf.

Where there are additional Safeguarding concerns identified these will be addressed using the NDH Safeguarding protocol.

### 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 include 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 if deemed appropriate, apply for Band A on DHC for a priority move out of the area or a direct 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 provide contact details of relevant agencies in order for the tenant to gain a court order should they wish. 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, signpost the residents to agencies, SPILTZ, NDADA who may be able to support or advise tenants to get independent legal advice / CAB in order to get a court order to have the tenancy put into a sole name. We will provide contact details of housing options in order to discuss emergency housing options.

#### c) Partner of a tenant

Where the victim is the partner of the tenant (i.e., they are not on the tenancy agreement) and they are unable to return to the property, we will signpost the residents to agencies, SPILTZ / NDADA who may be able to support or advise the victim to get independent legal advice / CAB. We will advise the victim to contact housing options

Any changes to tenancies will be with both parties' agreement or via a court order

### **Useful telephone numbers**

Fear Less (previously SPLITZ) support services- 0345 155 1074

North Devon against domestic abuse (NDADA)- 01271 370079

NDH Out of Hours – 0800 917 0619