



Domestic Abuse Policy for Tenants & Leaseholders

Issued by Housing & Community Safety

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Domestic Abuse Policy Quality Record

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council is committed to ensuring the safety of its tenants and leaseholders. The Council believes that all forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable and this Policy sets-out not only the Council's responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, but what further action the Council will take to support domestic abuse victims and their families in partnership with other agencies.

2. Scope of the policy

- 2.1 We recognise the harm Domestic Abuse can cause within our homes and communities. Domestic Abuse is often a hidden problem, but research shows it is unfortunately and steadily on the rise. We want all our tenants and leaseholders and colleagues to be safe from the impact of Domestic Abuse, and this policy sets out our commitment to help tackle this, and how we will aim to manage and support any cases of Domestic Abuse.
- 2.2 Along with other organisations, Nuneaton and Bedworth plays an important role in tackling Domestic Abuse, being well placed to help and support victims and survivors, as well as working with partner agencies such as the Police, Housing Associations, and Social Services to help tackle and further prevent abuse. To do this, all colleagues need to be aware of what Domestic Abuse is, how to spot the signs of it and what to do if they have any concerns.

3. Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 We recognise the cross-Government definition of 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/mental
- 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."

We recognise that this could cover issues such as FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), forced marriage, or 'Honour-based' violence.

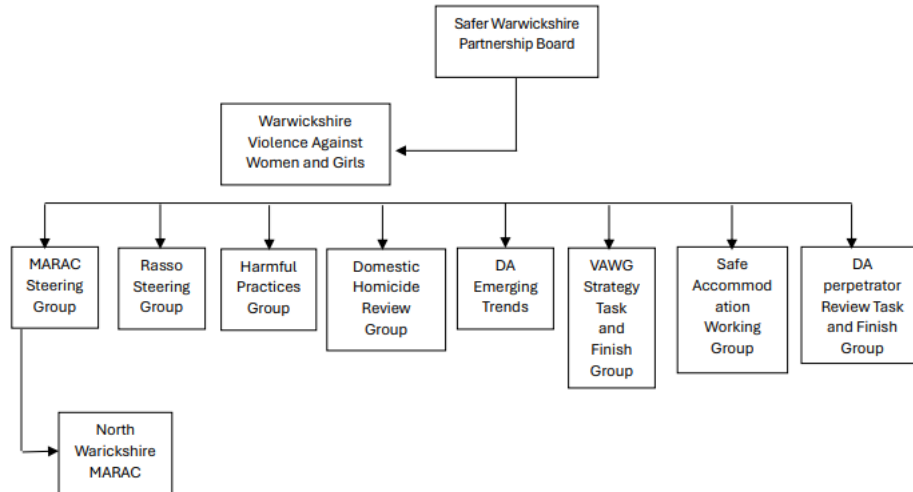
- 3.2 Further to this there is a statutory definition of Domestic Abuse: "*Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if—(a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and (b) the behaviour is abusive.*" –continuing on to say "*Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of*

any of the following—(a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4)); (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.”

- 3.3 Nuneaton and Bedworth has signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing “Make a Stand pledge”, which outlines our commitments around Domestic Abuse. For more information see here: <https://www.cih.org/media/ob5oirgo/make-a-stand-the-pledge-document.pdf> . If a colleague becomes aware of Domestic Abuse, they will always take the views and wishes of the tenant or leaseholder experiencing abuse into account, as well as manage their responsibilities around safeguarding.
- 3.4 This policy is applicable to all Nuneaton and Bedworth tenants and leaseholders and household members.
- 3.5 This policy aims to ensure that tenants and leaseholders and leaseholders who report they are experiencing Domestic Abuse are taken seriously and managed sensitively in accordance with their needs. It aims to ensure all colleagues act in a non-judgemental and sympathetic manner which reflects the tenants’ best interests and wishes.
- 3.6 We will give tenants and leaseholders experiencing Domestic Abuse access to accurate and appropriate advice about their housing options and signposting around their legal rights and responsibilities.

4. Nuneaton and Bedworth’s context

- 4.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council consistently have the highest district Domestic Abuse volumes in Warwickshire. There has continued to be a steady increase in reported domestic abuse incidents over the last ten years. This is the case nationally. This is in part felt to be due to increase confidence in victims to report concerns, but ultimately is reflective of the high prevalence of these issues.
- 4.2 Annually within Nuneaton and Bedworth, the local domestic abuse picture is captured within the Community Safety Strategic Assessment.
- 4.3 There is strong partnership infrastructure for Warwickshire to address various DA strands, as a local authority we work to ensure representation at all strategic and operational meetings. See table below:



VAWG Governance Structure 2023/24

4.4 Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner commissions a range of support services that we support to promote at a local level to ensure maximum impact.

4.5 The Violence Against Women Girls (VAWG) Board provides strategic oversight in relation to performance and any emerging issues arising from operational groups on a quarterly basis.

4.6 At a district level we work commissioned providers directly to ensure that services are delivered and promoted by building strong links with community and voluntary organisations via established networks.

5. Policy statement

5.1 We will ensure tenants and leaseholders can report Domestic Abuse to us through a variety of methods, including face to face, telephone, through our website or via email. We will respond to reports within 24 hours. If someone feels there is an imminent danger, they should always contact the police.

5.2 We commit to acting on all reports of Domestic Abuse that we receive and will work closely with the resident/s affected in decision making. We will also respond to reports from colleagues, contractors, external agencies, or other individuals, but we are mindful of an individuals consent to share information and will use information we receive sensitively.

5.3 While we recognise women and the LGBTQ+ community are disproportionately affected by Domestic Abuse; we will support those individuals experiencing Domestic Abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, race or ethnicity, sex, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

5.4 We are committed to working towards preventing and tackling Domestic Abuse to ensure that everybody can live free from fear, intimidation and violence based on the following principles:

- Those experiencing domestic abuse should never be made to feel responsible for the abuse
 - Those experiencing domestic abuse should not be required to take any action they reasonably feel will place them in greater danger
 - Those experiencing domestic abuse are best able to assess the danger they are in. The individual's perception of the situation will be of paramount importance.
- 5.5 We realise it is often extremely difficult for the individual to come forward for help and it may take several attempts for them to leave an abusive situation. We accept an individual may choose to return to a potentially abusive situation, but this will not affect the way in which their case is dealt with or the support provided if they subsequently return for help.
- 5.6 We will ensure specialist training is given to colleagues.
- 5.7 We will engage with the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process and other specialist agencies; and recognise partnership working is instrumental towards achieving a resolution. We will share information between agencies as required, whilst ensuring all data protection protocols are maintained.
- 5.8 We will use professional tools (such as the [DASH Risk Checklist](#)) to plan actions and support victims if this has not been completed by other agencies.
- 5.9 We recognise English may not be the first language for some vulnerable tenants and leaseholders and commit to using translation services where required whenever possible.
- 5.10 We will offer to meet victims in an agreed safe location, via their preferred method of communication, and will give opportunity to choose a colleague of a specific gender where possible.
- 5.11 We will aim to work across departments and partner agencies to resolve any issues with joint tenancies and helping a victim to be adequately housed.
- 5.12 Where emergency accommodation is required for safety reasons, we will arrange this with our partner agencies to ensure the most suitable temporary accommodation is identified.
- 5.13 We will aim to ensure sensitivity around lettings when Domestic Abuse is disclosed.
- 5.14 We will assist to provide increased security measures within/around the home where required, for example additional door locks for sole tenants. This may involve working in conjunction with partner agencies.
- 5.15 We will aim to agree and review an action plan with the individual that considers any vulnerable members of the household.
- 5.16 We will look to take firm action against the perpetrator where appropriate. This could also include supporting the perpetrator through partner agencies and/or intervention programmes to try and prevent recurrence of abuse.
- 5.17 We will support and empower individuals to report events to the police.
- 5.18 We recognise that cases of Domestic Abuse can be very sensitive and managing them must be done with care. Colleagues will ensure they only involve other

agencies and share information with the individual/s concerned when required, except for:

- Raising safeguarding concerns about adults with care and support needs or child protection concerns
 - Where we are required by law, for example, if being questioned by Police as part of a criminal investigation
- 5.19 We will ensure information is recorded confidentially, and not disclosed to any other household members without explicit consent. We will lock our cases when required to avoid unwanted individuals, such as abusive partners or ex-household members, accessing sensitive data.
- 5.20 We will meet our statutory and safeguarding requirements in line with our existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a vulnerable customer. In all cases of Domestic Abuse, colleagues should refer to the Safeguarding Policy. Any children witnessing Domestic Abuse would be considered a type of child abuse and safeguarding procedures should be followed. This also applies for any elderly household members, for example where financial abuse is occurring.
- 5.21 If any resident is unhappy about anything related to the policy, or how they have been treated in accordance with the policy, they may complain in line with our Complaints Policy.

6. Legal Duties

- 6.1 We will meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 30th April 2021. It includes:
- A revised legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right (as discussed in section 3).
 - Legal duty on Councils to fund support for survivors in safe accommodation • New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors
 - A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing.
- 6.2 The Care Act 2014 stipulates how local authorities and other parts of the system such as relevant partners should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. This includes those experiencing or having experienced domestic abuse.
- 6.3 The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has a right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- 6.4 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 17 places a duty upon the Council to consider the impact of its functions and decision in crime and disorder within their local area; and to fully cooperate within the local Community Safety Partnership (NABSCOP).

7. Monitoring and review

- 7.1 We will monitor cases and performance on an ongoing basis, including the number of domestic abuse cases received and the number of cases no longer requiring intervention (closed).

- 7.2 We will ensure effective implementation of this policy by publishing on our website and on our intranet. We will ensure overview sessions are held for teams that will be responsible for implementing the policy and make these sessions available for any new colleagues or refreshers.
- 7.3 We will monitor attendance of these sessions, and colleagues who have confirmed having read the document.
- 7.4 The effectiveness of this policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the policy scrutinised after 12 months.
- 7.5 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review.

8. Responding to Domestic Abuse

8.1 Support for victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse can be found at:

- SafeLives: www.safelives.org.uk
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance: www.dahalliance.org.uk
- Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk – support for children not adults
- Women’s Aid: www.womensaid.org.uk
- National Stalking Advocacy Service: www.paladinservice.co.uk
- Surviving Economic Abuse: www.survivingeconomicabuse.org
- Refuge: www.refuge.org.uk
- LGBTQ+ victims: www.galop.org.uk
- ‘Honour’ based abuse Victims: www.karmanirvana.org.uk
- BME victims: www.southallblacksisters.org.uk
- LD/Autistic Victims: www.respond.org.uk
- Male Victims: www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- For children: www.childline.org.uk
- For perpetrators: www.respectphoneline.org.uk

8.2 The Nuneaton and Bedworth Housing teams will be the main contact point for all victims and survivors of domestic abuse seeking support from the Council, along with staff, Members, volunteers and contracted services for advice on domestic abuse cases. They can be contacted on:

- Email: asb.team@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk
- Phone: 024 7637 6376

The team will be able to offer support, safety planning and onward referrals to other agencies for dedicated support.

8.3 For any concerns outside of office hours, where there is an immediate concern for safety, support can be sought from Warwickshire Police on 999 or 101 or the Council's emergency out of hours staff will be able to assist by calling 024 7638 2153.

9. Local Support Services

- **Refuge** – [Warwickshire Domestic Violence Service](#) is a countywide service that offers help and support to women, men and children experiencing domestic violence in Warwickshire. If you live in Warwickshire you can call [0800 408 1552](#) to speak to a support worker. If you are not able to call, please email DVS@refuge.org.uk. Always call 999 in an emergency.
- **Equation** - in partnership with Refuge Warwickshire, deliver a [domestic abuse service for men living in Warwickshire](#).
- **Community Safety** – the [Police and Crime Partnership](#) is a collection of community safety agencies working with Warwickshire County Council to achieve a safer and more secure Warwickshire. Tackling domestic violence and abuse is a priority for the police and partner agencies and this partnership helps to ensure that the right services are in place to help victims and their families.
- **LGBTQ+** - National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Domestic Violence helpline run by [Galop](#), provides support to LGBT people suffering domestic abuse. Phone: [0800 999 5428](#).

Rape and Sexual Abuse

- **RoSA** – [RoSA](#) is an independent charity working throughout Warwickshire, offering free confidential support for anyone who has experienced rape, sexual abuse, or sexual violence. Phone: [01788 551151](#).
- **Safeline** – [Safeline](#) is a specialist charity providing a range of services across Warwickshire to support all survivors of rape and sexual abuse. Phone: [01926 402498](#) (or text 07860 027573).
- **The Blue Sky Centre (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)** – [The Blue Sky Centre](#) is a SARC where any victim of rape or sexual assault will receive medical care, police intervention (if they wish to report the crime), and various other support services. Phone: [01926 507805](#).
- **Child Exploitation** – Children and young people have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of abuse. It's everyone's responsibility to spot the signs of child exploitation and protect children and young people in Warwickshire. Visit the [Something's Not Right](#) website for information and details of support available.
- **Rugby Families First** – Rugby Families First is a safe and confidential service who provide support to families who have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence, a family member in or due out of prison, problems with neighbours, friends or other family members and concerns around family breakdown.
- **Domestic Abuse Counselling Service (DACS)** – The [Domestic Abuse Counselling Service \(DACS\)](#) offers counselling to both female and male victims of abuse in Nuneaton, North Warwickshire and Stratford upon Avon. They offer a perpetrators programme in Nuneaton.
- **Family Intervention Counselling Service** – The [Family Intervention Counselling Service](#) run a number of courses for perpetrators of domestic violence, their partners and children in South Warwickshire.
- **Cohort 4** – [Cohort 4](#) is a peer support organisation for women based in North Warwickshire. It is a non-profit social enterprise made up of women who all have experience of abuse, criminal justice and mental health issues. Women decide what they need and when they need it, to enhance and reinforce their confidence and well

being in the community of North Warwickshire, which covers Tamworth, Atherstone, North Warwickshire villages, Nuneaton and Bedworth.

10. Tailored Response

- 10.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council recognises that not all victims/survivors of domestic abuse can access services in the same manner; or at the same point of their journey. Each response given to an identified or potential victim will be tailored to their needs and wishes. This will also include for those with protected characteristics.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

- 11.1 **All Staff:** are responsible for ensuring that that they are aware of how to identify a victim of domestic abuse and how to direct them for support.
- 11.2 **Assistant Directors:** are responsible for ensuring that this Policy and related procedures are implemented, monitored and regularly reviewed.
- 11.3 **The Landlord Services Manager:** will be responsible for ensuring that this policy and associated procedures are implemented. This role will also be the main link for all partnership related activity.
- 11.4 **All Service Managers:** All service managers (and contract managers responsible for contracted services) must ensure that they are their staff have received the appropriate training and are confident to identify victims of domestic abuse and signpost accordingly.
- 11.5 **Team Leaders within the Housing & Community Safety Directorate:** will be responsible for implementing this policy and associated procedures on a day-to-day basis. They will be the main point of contact for all other staff/Members that have identified a victim of domestic abuse and will ensure that an appropriate response is in place.

12. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy will sit alongside existing Nuneaton and Bedworth Policies and documents including:

- ASB Policy and Procedure
- Tenancy Agreement
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Allocations Policy
- Decant Policy
- Management Move Procedure
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy/Strategy
- Vulnerable Person's Policy