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| Domestic Abuse  Policy |  |
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**Last updated: October 2023**

**Contents Page**

[Policy statement](#policy_statement) 3

Aims of Policy 4

Implementation 4

Partnership Working 4

Confidentiality 5

Training 5

Monitoring and Review 6

Useful Definitions:

**The Councils** – Refers to the South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council.

**Landlord** – This will be the named Landlord on the Tenancy Agreement and will be either South Oxfordshire District Council **OR** Vale of White Horse District Council

**The Service Provider –** This means the appointed sub-contractor for the Councils who will implement the terms of the Policy. As of 30 October 2023, this will be Soha Housing.

**Tenant/s –** Person/s who occupy the property which is owned or leased by the Landlord.

Domestic Abuse Policy

**Policy Statement**

1. This policy sets out The Councils approach to preventing and challenging domestic abuse. Public and professionals often use both the terms ‘domestic abuse’ and ‘domestic violence’, however domestic abuse covers a wider definition as set out in 3.1. This policy is aimed at our residents, the wider community and our agency partners.
2. The Service Provider will not tolerate domestic abuse and will take prompt and appropriate action to recognise and support any person suffering from or threatened with abuse. The policy is intended to cover all instances of domestic abuse.
3. The Government defines domestic violence as:

*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*

*Controlling behaviour*

*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*

*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 includes issues of concern such as so called 'honour-based violence', female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. The definition was widened in 2013 to include those aged 16 or over.*

**Aim of the Policy**

1. It is a condition of The Councils Tenancy Agreement not to perpetrate domestic abuse. All allegations must be dealt with according to The Service Provider’s procedures.
2. The Service Provider aims to support victims of domestic abuse by providing:

* Safe ways for victims to report Domestic Abuse to The Service Provider (e.g., text message, website, safely in-person or via a third party)
* A victim-centred approach to domestic abuse.
* Domestic abuse ‘champions’
* Appropriate legal action against perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to safeguard victims.

**Implementation**

1. The Service Provider will have effective procedures outlining how victims can report Domestic Abuse via telephone in and out of hours, on-line reporting or in person in their offices or in the community. The Service Provider will fully investigate each case promptly, develop an agreed action plan and offer a named member of staff to manage the case and risk assess all incidents of domestic abuse.

**Partnership Working**

1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to monitor the level of domestic abuse in their communities and establish partnerships. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) bring together the representatives of statutory, voluntary and private organisations.
2. The Service Provider is committed to partnership work as identified in the Respect Standard and will work with agencies through the Community Safety partnership (CSP) to develop strategies for dealing with and preventing the causes of domestic abuse. The Servicer Provider will maintain effective representation on formal and informal strategic safety partner groups such as MARAC, the multi-agency risk assessment conference.
3. The Service Provider will work with the police to promote ‘Clare’s Law’ or the Right to Ask. This allows a person to request information from the police on whether a partner has a history of violence or abuse. The Service Provider will explore, with the police, how The Service Provider can enable a person to know that their new partner has a history of violence or abuse.
4. The Service Provider will further work with the police to ensure that Domestic Violence Protection Orders are used appropriately to allow victims 28 days to get the support they need and avoid contact from the perpetrator.
5. The Service Provider and The Councils will continue to support Domestic Homicide Reviews and implement any learning.
6. The Service Provider will work with the Community Safety Partnership to seek implementation of a perpetrator’s programme to prevent future abuse and help perpetrators change their behaviours.

**Confidentiality**

1. Under the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential.
2. Officers will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the resident concerned, unless the information is necessary for the protection of children or is required by law.

**Training**

1. The Councils and The Service Provider will provide appropriate training, guidance and support to staff dealing with domestic abuse cases. Awareness of issues around equality and diversity are mandatory for staff.
2. The Service Provider will further train contractors to look out for tell-tale signs of domestic abuse (e.g., broken bathroom door locks) and to notify The Service Provider. The Service Provider will incorporate triggers into Customer Service processes to ensure that employees dealing directly with Housing Management are notified when suspicion of abuse arises from repairs visit or noise complaints.

**Equality and Diversity**

1. The Service Provider will ensure that the service addresses individual needs and apply the policy consistently and fairly. Not all groups are always equally well supported, and attention needs to be paid to the needs of groups such as people with mental health problems and learning disabilities, migrant groups and ex-offenders.

**Monitoring and Responsibility**

1. All reports of domestic abuse will be recorded. The Service Provider will benchmark against other associations and provide performance information against service standards monthly to the Councils. The Head of Service for The Councils is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.