

Domestic Abuse Policy

DESIGN HEADER TO INCLUDE POLICY NAME AND DATE RANGE

INFORMATION

Policy Name	Domestic Abuse Policy
Effective Date(s)	February 2023 - February 2025
Approved By	Risk & Compliance Group, Customer Services Committee
Approval Date	21 st February 2023
Policy Owner/Dept	Supported Housing
Policy Author	Sharon Wheeler – Designated Safeguarding & Tenancy Support Manager
Review Date	February 2025
Version Number	2.0

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes	Approver

Your Housing Group Strategic Priorities			
Safe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Viability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landlord	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Growth	<input type="checkbox"/>
People	<input type="checkbox"/>	Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relevant National Standards or Regulation	Please State if the Policy aligns to any of the Regulator’s Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Standard • Neighbourhood and Community Standard
--	---

Relevant Legislation	Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law) Data Protection Act 2018 Modern Slavery Act 2015 Serious Crime Act 2015 Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing 2014 Protection of Freedoms Act 2014 Equality Act 2010
-----------------------------	--

	Police and Justice Act 2006 Child Safeguarding legislation including Children Act 2004 The Children Act 2004 Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004 (S9 implemented in 2011 Sexual Offences Act 2003 Human Rights Act 1998 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 The Care Act 1996 Housing Act 1996
--	---

1. Purpose of the Policy

Perpetrators of domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on the lives of their victims and their actions can result in injury, trauma and potentially death.

The policy applies to anyone living in our properties or receiving a service from us. We have a separate policy which applies to YHG colleagues, contractors, and volunteers.

This policy sets out how YHG will respond to anyone suffering from domestic abuse and the key principles that underpin our response. The policy also sets out how we will hold perpetrators to account.

It recognises the need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies with greater experience of domestic abuse in order to reduce the risk of harm to survivors.

Our aim is to support survivors of domestic abuse by

- Speaking to the customer and taking account of any safety concerns around communication
- Listening and believing their account
- Working with them to assess risk and agree an appropriate action plan.

We will work with relevant external agencies, share information appropriately and in line with GDPR and our data sharing protocols.

We will work with survivors ensuring we stay focused on their individual needs and the needs of their family/ household.

This policy is supported Domestic Abuse Procedure and the Safeguarding Procedure.

2. Scope of the Policy

This document should be used by employees, contractors and volunteers of YHG to understand how YHG should respond to disclosures or incidents of domestic abuse relating to those living in our properties or receiving a service from us.

A separate policy “Colleague Disclosure of Domestic Abuse” details our response to colleagues, contractors and volunteers who disclose that they and their household are affected by domestic abuse”.

3. Definitions

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines abusive behaviour as any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Domestic Abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the above types of abuse. It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

Both parties must be 16 and over and “personally connected”, defined as being married or civil partners; or have agreed to a marriage or civil partnership; are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other; or have a parental relationship with same child; or are relatives. Domestic Abuse can also occur between adult children and parents, or those in similar relationships.

The term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, ‘honour’-based abuse, as well as many others, including offences committed online.

Children

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims/survivors of domestic abuse. Any reference in the Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and (b) is related to either of the parties.

Children living in households where domestic abuse occurs are recognised as victims of that abuse in their own right and our approach reflects this. The safety of all survivors is our priority, and we will inform statutory services where we believe that a child is harmed or at risk due to domestic violence.

We will also make appropriate safeguarding referrals in respect of any vulnerable adult who may also be impacted by the abuse.

YHG will ensure that relevant employees are familiar with the statutory definition of domestic abuse, and with the abusive behaviours detailed within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the Government's strategy on Tackling Violence against women and girls' strategy (2021).

4. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) values and principles

YHG is committed to the values and principles of the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#). These are integral to and underpin our approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

5. Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Safeguarding Operational Group, YHG Equality Impact Assessors Group, Local Authority Safeguarding Boards. We have also consulted with customers with lived experience, as well as specialist domestic abuse services.

6. Background and Context

This policy sets out how Your Housing Group will help and support YHG customers who are experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse. This includes considering the needs of children and others impacted by the abuse.

We understand that our offer to survivors needs to come from a place of understanding and respect.

It is our intention to work in line with the following principles:

- Integrity- we will be open and honest in our dealing with customers and colleagues
- Empathy- we will listen and try to fully understand their situation
- Empowerment and respect- we will work together with survivors and ensure that their wishes are acknowledged and understood, recognising the insight they have into their situation, and the steps they've already taken to keep themselves safe
- Accountability- we will be accountable and willing to discuss options and be honest about what we are able to do
- Focus on Survivor Safety- we will ensure survivor safety is our priority, ensuring their voices are heard and their well-being is at the heart of what we do
- No Judgement- we will be non-judgemental and seek to understand the survivor's experiences.

We understand that people have different experiences of disadvantage and discrimination depending on their characteristics, identity and background. In keeping our approach person centred, we will aim to acknowledge and understand the individual needs of survivors and offer services and approaches that take account of their identity as a whole. This includes considering specific and intersecting needs based on race, gender, sexuality, religion and culture.

We understand that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse regardless of age, gender, race or sexuality. However, we recognise that domestic abuse is a largely gendered crime with the vast majority of survivors being women and girls, as set out in the government's Tackling violence against women and girls (TVAWG) strategy (2021).

- Each year nearly 2 million people in the UK suffer some form of domestic abuse - 1.3 million female survivors (8.2% of the population) and 600,000 male survivors (4% of the population) (Womens' Aid 2022)
 - Seven women a month are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales (Womens' Aid 2022)
 - 280,000 people aged between 60 and 75 experienced domestic abuse in 2019 (Age UK)

We understand that domestic abuse is a crime that happens within a community, and we will work in partnership with national and local agencies such as specialist services run by Black, minoritized, LGBT+, Deaf or disabled groups for people in those communities, ("For and By Services) local authorities, the police, and health services, to provide a co-ordinated community response.

7. Policy Detail

Disclosures of Domestic Abuse

We will accept reports and disclosures of domestic abuse through any available communication channel and ensure all incidents are logged.

Where a member of staff suspects or witnesses domestic abuse taking place in our homes, they must log the incident onto our risk reporting system.

We will provide clear guidance and training for all relevant staff on being alert to the signs of domestic abuse, how to report concerns and disclosures and how relevant staff manage cases of domestic abuse.

Where disclosure is made or YHG become aware that someone may be at risk due to domestic abuse, we will:

Contact the survivor taking safety into consideration so that telling us doesn't put them at further risk. We will also agree how ongoing contact will be maintained.

We will always accept the survivor's account as a true reflection of events.

Assessing Risk

Work with them to assess the risk to them and their household/ family

Work proactively with the survivor to identify options and support them to make choices that best meets their needs, and those of their family/household

Work in partnership with agencies such as the Police, Social Care, Children's Services and other specialist support, advice and accommodation groups to support the customer and reduce risk.

Support the lead statutory agency in taking action against those committing the abuse. This includes taking tenancy enforcement action against perpetrators where it is appropriate to do so and does not put the survivor at further risk.

Ongoing work with survivors

We will work with the survivor to review the risk and update any action plan on an ongoing basis. We will consider the safety of the survivor's home and offer additional security or alternative housing options based on circumstances.

We consider any access or communication needs that the survivor may have for example we will offer domestic abuse survivors the opportunity to access translation services, meeting them at a safe location outside their property, if needed, or the opportunity to speak to a YHG employee of the same gender, where possible.

We also acknowledge that not all survivors of domestic abuse end the relationship with the perpetrator, and we will work to support and maximise survivor safety whilst being respectful of their decision.

We understand that the survivor may have practical and emotional reasons which they feel stops them making the decisions and taking the action they want. We will work with survivors to provide advice and support on any barriers and challenges they have.

Protecting children and vulnerable adults

We will make a safeguarding referral to the relevant local authority when needed to protect children or vulnerable adults impacted by the abuse

Working in partnership to provide a community response

YHG will work with local agencies or partnerships to ensure survivors are supported in the most effective way. We will identify specialist domestic abuse support agencies and develop links and working relationships, so we are able to refer survivors to services that reflect their own identities and characteristics and who are better placed to understand and meet their needs. This could be specialist services based on survivors' gender, age, sexuality, culture, religion, race or ethnicity.

Survivor Feedback

YHG will continually improve our response to domestic abuse by asking for and learning from survivor feedback and the feedback from other agencies including Domestic Homicide Review Safeguarding Adult Reviews, and Serious Case Reviews.

We will establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the detection, recording and reporting of domestic abuse incident. We will undertake regular audits to ensure policy and procedures are followed.

YHG colleagues

YHG has a responsibility to provide all staff with a safe and effective working environment. YHG have a separate policy in relation to managing domestic abuse towards colleagues, which includes volunteers and contractors.

Action against the perpetrator

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 specifies that we must hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account. Committing domestic abuse in a YHG property is a crime and a breach of tenancy. YHG are committed to managing domestic abuse cases on an individual basis, with a survivor focused approach whilst holding perpetrators to account.

In holding perpetrators to account we will:

- Ensure that our colleague training reflects the principle that responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator
- That our publicity and awareness raising on domestic abuse puts an emphasis on perpetrator responsibility
- Case management focuses on ways to support survivors so disruption to their lives is minimised including sign posting to legal help to enable this
- Work with partner agencies including the Police to share information or evidence that may support perpetrator prosecution
- Consider taking action to end a perpetrator's tenancy where appropriate

We will work alongside survivors to ensure that any action we take is done so in partnership with them and their wishes will be considered.

We will consider appropriate action to take against the perpetrator. However, we will not take action against the perpetrator if it may increase the risk to the survivor. Our top priority is to ensure the survivor's safety and wellbeing.

In circumstances where it is appropriate to do so, we may refer perpetrators to domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. We will manage any breach of tenancy agreement by perpetrators in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

8. Responsibilities under this Policy

Relevant staff are responsible for implementing this Policy and being vigilant in identifying any incidents that may fall under it. Incidents should be discussed with colleague's Line Manager. Managers should refer to the domestic abuse procedure and other relevant guidance.

If any member of staff has any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child and/or adult at risk, they must immediately follow the YHG Safeguarding Procedure.

Responsibility for carrying out this policy rests with relevant staff

This includes:

- Your Housing Group employees
- Agency Staff where relevant

The Safeguarding Champions and leads are available for providing advice and support to managers.

9. Risk Management

Responding appropriately to domestic abuse is a key responsibility for housing, care and support providers. We understand the risks posed to customers due to domestic abuse and YHG will seek to mitigate risk through this policy. When responding to any incident, we take a risk-based view to the actions being taken to ensure that the most appropriate action is taken, and the welfare and safety of customers and staff are at the forefront. This is also reflected in any Safeguarding risk which is identified and managed through the Group Risk Management Framework.

10. Data Protection, Record Storage and Retention

It is recognised that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for survivors to report and YHG shall maintain the confidentiality of a disclosure regarding violence to the extent allowed by law and unless to do so would

result in significant risk of harm to any person on any cases that are reported.

YHG will however, share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, MARAC and other groups where necessary, to deal with cases more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the survivor and/or their dependants to provide better or more effective support.

The principles of UK GDPR and YHG's Data Protection Policy will apply to this Policy.

11. Equality and Diversity

The policy complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure equality of treatment for all customers without discrimination or prejudice. Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, including those with protected characteristics and males.

Issues around diversity been considered around access to and delivery of any services covered by the Policy.

An EIA has been undertaken on this Policy.

On request, YHG will provide translations of all its documents, policies and procedures in various languages and other accessible formats.

12. Communication

Staff will be made aware of the policy and related procedures and have a responsibility to keep up to date with it. Domestic Abuse training will also refer to the policy. YHG's Safeguarding Champions will also play a key role in communicating YHG's domestic abuse policies and procedures and providing guidance and support.

We are committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and a key part of this is ensuring that our residents and communities are clear on our position. This includes giving information in newsletters, resident communication and on our website. We will regularly publicise on internal staff platforms and external resident platforms and provide training for relevant staff.

13. Learning and Development

Training on domestic abuse is available as part of training on Safeguarding. YHG is committed to have arrangements in place to ensure effective training of all staff. YHG expects all their staff to be trained in children and adult safeguarding at level 1.

Front-line colleagues in specific roles will receive face to face training on Domestic Abuse. YHG Safeguarding Champions will also be available to support colleagues on responding appropriately to reports or incidents of domestic abuse.

14. Performance Management of this Policy

Cases of domestic abuse will be reviewed by the appropriate manager. The Safeguarding team will audit domestic abuse cases and report to YHG Risk and Compliance Group including any trends. The team will also identify any issues with case management and report to the relevant Heads of Service and Service Managers. The effectiveness of this policy will also be monitored through case management reviews.

15. Review of this Policy

This policy will be formally reviewed on a two-year basis in consultation with customers and partner agencies of Your Housing Group, to reflect changes in research, national legislation and policy and local support and service provision.

Related Documents

Document Type	Name
Connected Policies and Procedures	<p><i>DAHA: It links to all relevant policies including but not restricted to safeguarding, data protection, anti-social behaviour, eviction, arrears/damage policies.</i></p> <p>Domestic Abuse Procedure Domestic Abuse Colleague Disclosure Policy</p> <p>Safeguarding Policy Safeguarding Procedure</p> <p>Data Protection Policy ASB & Hate Crime Policy Customer Feedback Policy Tenancy Policy Repairs & Maintenance Policy Neighbourhood Management Policy Income Policy</p>
Forms and Letters	
Leaflets/Publicity Material	
Training Materials Available	
Intranet/ Website Page	

Checklist

Policy Name: Domestic Abuse Policy	
Version No: 2.0	Effective Date: 21 st February 2023
Status: Full Review	
Previous Policy Name (where appropriate) n/a	
Brief Summary of Changes from Previous Version:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHG working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation - required to meet 42 standards • Policy extensively re-written to align with DAHA values and principles and reflect standards • Need to ensure that document is accessible to both customers and colleagues and clearly sets out our approach • Includes reference to Domestic Abuse Act 2021 • Greater emphasis on taking “person centred approach” and working with specialist agencies to deliver support • Emphasis on taking a community led response • Separate policy for colleagues – in development. 	
Internal Consultation Groups: Consultation has taken place with the YHG Safeguarding Operational Group, YHG Equality Impact Assessors Group, Local Authority Safeguarding Boards and the Safeguarding Lead for YHG’s Customer Services Committee. We have also consulted with customers with lived experience, as well as specialist domestic abuse services.	Customer Consultation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Date of Customer Consultation: Dec 22- Jan 23
	Customer Consultation Brief Details: Customer consultation – customers with lived experience – Dec 2022 Customer Connect Panel – 05/01/2023
Link to Consultation Document(s):	
Date Initial Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: n/a	Equality Impact Assessor name(s): Carly-Anne Greenall, Darren Shelley, Danielle McCann
Reason for Decision: Full review undertaken.	
Date Full Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: 13/12/2022	
Brief Outline of any Changes Recommended from EIA:	
Consideration needs to be made for joint tenancies – domestic abuse clause to be added to all TAs? What financial support can we offer a survivor?	
Data Protection/ GDPR Implications: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Brief Outline of Data Protection/GDPR Implications:	
Information sharing across relevant agencies (subject to appropriate information sharing protocols) takes place so that all agencies understand the extent and impact of the hoarding	

tendency to work together to support the individual. YHG policy and procedures on data protection are followed as part of the policy.

Legal Implications: <input type="checkbox"/>		Legal Panel Consulted: <input type="checkbox"/>		Date:	
Risk Implications: <input type="checkbox"/>		Risk Logged on Datix: <input type="checkbox"/>		Date:	
Resource Implications	People: <input type="checkbox"/>	Finance: <input type="checkbox"/>	Asset: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Brief Summary of how Resource Implications have been addressed:					
How will communication on this Policy take place: (please delete as appropriate)					
Intranet/ E-Learning/ Email/ Face to Face Training					
Policy Owner: (Department) Supported Housing			Policy Author: Sharon Wheeler, Designated Safeguarding & Tenancy Support Manager		
Policy Signed Off by: (service manager or sponsor): Head of Supported Housing				Date: 06/01/2023	
Policy Quality Checked by Research and Policy Manager:				Date: 06/01/2023	
Policy Approved by Risk and Compliance Group:				Date: 17/01/2023	
Policy Approved by Customer Services Committee				Date: 21/02/2023	

DAHA Values

- **Integrity** - Accreditation is the right thing to do for residents and staff. The organisation's intention should be to increase victim/survivor safety and housing security and hold perpetrators to account.
- **Collaboration** - Internal and external collaboration should be at the heart of organisations' response. Providers must demonstrate true collaboration with victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- **Empathy** - Empathy should be present in every decision that might impact the welfare of staff and residents/tenants experiencing domestic abuse, through a survivor-led and needs led approach.
- **Empowerment** Residents and staff should always be listened to and empowered to feel safe to make decisions about their safety and housing security. All decisions and outcomes should be based on survivors' needs and wishes and should be created in collaboration
- **Respect** - Your organisation should have a culture of respect, both internally and externally, where people are free to express their needs.
- **Accountability** - Housing providers and local authorities must act with accountability and humility in their roles, both towards employees and residents/staff and be transparent about the limitations of their knowledge and support.

DAHA Principles

- **Non-judgement and belief** - The provider must create an enabling environment Where survivors can disclose abuse without judgement, knowing they will be believed.
- **Being person-centred** - Providers will develop a response that is reflective of the needs of individuals. Staff are provided with the knowledge, skills, confidence and support, to offer each person an individualised response that also considers and confronts the structural inequalities and barriers.
- **Amplifying survivor voice** - providers demonstrate that they seek, value, and incorporate feedback from a diversity of survivor experiences. They amplify their voices to inform development, delivery and improvement of policies and practice.
- **Victim/ survivor safety** - Creating safe homes and communities where perpetrators are held to account for their behaviour.
- **Working towards a community coordinated response (CCR)** - All agencies that have contact with families have a responsibility to consider their own organisation's response and how they work collaboratively in partnership with others in that community.