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# Domestic Abuse Policy

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February 2024

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Housing Services

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Housing Manager	Domestic Abuse Policy	Housing Services

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Housing Committee		Date of review or approval

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose and scope

This Domestic Abuse Policy sets out how the Council will respond to reports of domestic abuse and is intended to ensure that Stroud District Council tenants & leaseholder should not live in fear of abuse or violence.

This policy applies to anyone living in a Stroud District Council owned property and our tenants and leaseholders.

### 1.2 Policy Objectives

The aim of the domestic abuse policy is to ensure the safety of tenants who may be affected by domestic abuse. The Council are aware that domestic abuse can occur in any home and will aim to support any tenant who is a victim of domestic abuse. The Council recognise that domestic abuse can be a distressing experience and will collaborate with tenants and all relevant agencies to ensure support.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that:

- Tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse are aware that they can approach our staff in total confidence and understand that staff will be supportive and empathetic to their needs.
- We will treat all reports of domestic abuse as a high priority and ensure that staff are able to signpost tenants to the appropriate support agencies who can provide specialist advice and support and / or work with the appropriate partners to support the tenant.
- Ensure that staff are trained to recognise, report, and understand the pathways for dealing with domestic abuse.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the support services and how to work in a multi-agency approach.

## 2. Defining Domestic Abuse

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

- **Controlling behaviour** can be a range of acts designed to isolate a person and make them subordinate or dependent on the perpetrator.
- **Coercive Control** is a pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation, and intimidation used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.
- **Physical Abuse** is any act that results in a physical injury that was intended to be intentional or because of punishment.
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse** is mistreatment of a person where the perpetrator intends to cause mental or emotional pain or injury.
- **Sexual Abuse** is any act of a sexual nature which is performed in a criminal manner.
- **Financial/ Economic Abuse** is any behaviour that has a substantial effect on using or maintain another person's money or property.

- 2.1** 'Domestic abuse is any incident which involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive and where the people involved are aged sixteen or over and have been personally connected to each other regardless of gender or sexuality<sup>1</sup>.'
- 2.2** Domestic abuse is any incident which involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive and where the people involved are aged sixteen or over and have been personally connected to each other regardless of gender or sexuality.' This also includes concerns in ethnic (BME) communities such as 'honour-based violence,' female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

### **3. Victim Centred Approach**

- 3.1** Stroud District Council treats all reports of domestic abuse seriously and all victims are given the highest priority. Council staff will always accept what they are told as accurate by a victim reporting abuse and will not judge.
- 3.2** All housing staff are trained to be alert to the signs of domestic abuse and how to appropriately raise any concerns, including logging information on secure file.
- 3.3** Stroud District Council staff will listen and understand the needs of victims and ensure signposting to the relevant support.
- 3.4** We will work in partnership with the relevant support agencies, delivering a person-centred approach and agreeing a way forward.
- 3.5** We will ensure that all those subjected to abuse are dealt with in a sympathetic and empathetic manner and that their needs are considered.
- 3.6** We will encourage all customers to report the abuse to the police, seek legal advice and the relevant agencies.
- 3.7** We are aware that economic abuse can leave victims with rent arrears and financial concerns and will collaborate with them to ensure they can sustain a tenancy. Where appropriate this may include supporting with applications for financial assistance such as discretionary housing payments and/or the tenant support fund.
- 3.8** The Council leads on the Countywide Target Hardening and Sanctuary Scheme which ensures the provision of security measures within the victim's home. This can also include the provision of a sanctuary room in higher risk cases.
- 3.9** Measures can be taken to reduce abuse by collaborating with the survivor to implement a safety plan, including support from partnership agencies, additional security measures in the home or temporary accommodation.

#### **4. Partnership Working**

- 4.1 The Council works in partnership with the police, GDASS and other agencies.
- 4.2 The main domestic abuse service provision for the county is provided by Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS). The service is designed to meet the needs of all victims of domestic abuse in Gloucestershire. Green square Accord manages this service.
- 4.3 The Council also works in partnership with Green square Accord by providing properties for the Places of Safety project.
- 4.4 Staff will work through a MARAC approach (multi agency risk assessment conference) which is a victim focused panel where information is shared between partners on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse. The role through MARAC is to evaluate the information shared and decide on the most effective way forward.
- 4.5 We will work with partnership agencies to consider legal action available to deal with the perpetrators of domestic abuse. When appropriate to do so we will signpost perpetrators for support.

#### **5.0 Action Against Perpetrators**

- 5.1 As part of any investigation the Council will collaborate with partners to ensure action against the perpetrator where it is appropriate to do so, which may include injunctions, notice of seeking possession and possession proceedings. The primary focus of this policy is to protect victims of domestic abuse however the council will also offer support to perpetrators to prevent further abuse and promote rehabilitation.
- 5.2 Domestic Abuse is a breach of the Council's tenancy agreement and is a ground for possession under the Housing Act 1988.

#### **6.0 Equality & Diversity**

- 6.1 Stroud District Council is committed to equality & diversity, ensuring that everyone is treated fairly, have the same opportunities and valuing individual differences.
- 6.2 Stroud District Council will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or other grounds set out in our equality & diversity policy.

#### **7.0 Confidentiality**

- 7.1 All reports of Domestic Abuse will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.
- 7.2 Contact will not be made with the perpetrator unless the victim has given us consent and it is deemed safe to do so.
- 7.3 Where a joint tenancy is in place, the perpetrator may have the right to access the tenancy file. In these instances, staff will ensure that confidential information pertaining to domestic abuse is redacted.

## **8. Legislation**

- Housing Act 1996
- Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998

## **2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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- The Tenant Relationship Manager will be responsible for implementing this policy
- Application of the policy is the responsibility of all housing members and staff

## **3 RELATED DOCUMENTS**

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- Click and type: List of any relevant policies or other documents. Delete section if not required
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## **4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Click and type: List any acknowledgements if required. Delete section if not required

## **5 APPENDICES**

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- A. Click and type: Forms, templates, other documents, where relevant. Delete section if not required

## **6 REFERENCES**

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