



	Organisation Name Somerset Community Housing Trust	Version: 2
Policy	Domestic Abuse Policy	
Ref	H:Policies/Domestic Abuse policy	
Staff affected	All	Effective Date: May 2010
Approved by	SCHT Board	Approval Date: May 2010
Lead Officer/ Policy Owner	Director of Customer Services (Housing & Support)	Review Date: May 2013

Policy Statement

Our commitment to sustainable communities where individuals can thrive recognises that they must be places where all can live without fear of domestic abuse, however it is manifested.

We will work in partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies to keep victims of domestic abuse safe in their homes and prevent them from living in fear.

1. Scope

1.1 This policy outlines the Trust's approach to effectively tackling all incidents of domestic abuse where the perpetrator or victim is a Somerset Community Housing Trust tenant or member of their household. Domestic abuse is an issue that cross cuts all areas of our work. This domestic abuse policy replaces the 2004 Domestic Violence policy.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The Director of Customer Services (Housing & Support) has overall responsibility for the policy and its related procedures.

- 2.2 The Anti Social Behaviour Manager has operational responsibility for planning and managing relevant procedures and practices to ensure the delivery of policy objectives.
- 2.3 Tenancy Compliance officers have operational responsibility for the procedures which underpin this policy and support the effective response to domestic abuse cases.
- 2.4 All Trust staff and all resident groups and representatives will support our approach to domestic abuse.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (including sexual, emotional, financial or psychological) between people that are or have been partners or family members. It can affect everyone, married and unmarried people, people who live together or in different homes, young and old, straight and gay, women and men. It can cross generations, for example grown up children abusing their parents.

4. Principles

- 4.1 We believe that no one should live in fear of abuse or violence.
 - We will respond to reports of Domestic abuse within 24 hours, meeting the victim at a safe, accessible location of their choice. We will arrange for an interpreter if this is required, and make arrangements to deal with any other communication difficulties or disabilities that the complainant may have.
 - We will take a victim-centred approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse. We will deal sensitively with all complaints. We will accept the victim's account and will not insist on the victim providing proof of abuse, although some form of evidence will be required where legal action is to be taken.
 - We will take a flexible approach in responding to incidents of domestic abuse, to take account of the varying circumstances of victims and the different courses of action, which may be possible and appropriate. We will ask the victim what their preferred method of contact is, considering that they may still reside with the perpetrator.
 - Where emergency accommodation is needed we will

provide advice and support in getting access to this.

- We will devise an action plan with the victim. We will discuss immediate personal safety of the victim and any children, the safety of existing accommodation, reporting incidents to the police, tenancy rights advice, and arrange for a referral to a specialist domestic abuse support agency (if the victim agrees to this). We will ask what other services are already aware of the situation and work with them appropriately.
- We will treat all reports in confidence. We will encourage victims to allow us to share information with other agencies. Where there is a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable person, or in order to stop a crime being committed we have a duty to disclose such information to the relevant statutory agency. We are part of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) arrangements and will refer high risk cases to the relevant MARAC, without consent, as per the MARAC arrangements.
- If the person suffering domestic abuse feels able to remain in their home either temporarily or permanently but request additional security measures, then we will arrange for these to be installed, where practical, either by the Trust or a third party such as the Police Bobby Van Service or Sanctuary Scheme (where one is available).
- We will treat repairs that arise as a result of domestic abuse as a priority and will exercise discretion over whether to recharge for these.
- We will seek to take action against the perpetrator where this is possible and supported by the victim. Where the victim of domestic abuse has fled their home, leaving the perpetrator in occupation, we will usually take steps to evict the perpetrator using ground 14a, Section 8, of the 1996 Housing Act.
- We will keep up-to-date records of local agencies, which offer advice or support to victims of domestic abuse and participate in any local forums established to consider the needs of those suffering from domestic violence.
- The Trust will continue to work with relevant agencies to develop appropriate and effective strategies for responding to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse, and participates in strategic domestic abuse partnerships.

5. Application

5.1 Application

A set of detailed procedures will accompany this policy to ensure that:

- 1) All reports of domestic abuse are thoroughly investigated and acted upon.
- 2) The complainant is fully involved in the action planning.
- 3) There is detailed recording of the incidents and the investigations carried out.
- 4) Victims are clearly advised when no further action can be taken to resolve an issue and a case is being closed. We will fully explain our reasons.
- 5) Victims will be referred for further support if they wish.
- 6) There are clear agreed timescales for responding to issues.
- 7) All parties involved in a case are aware of responsible named staff.
- 8) Cases are regularly monitored and reviewed.

6. Equal Opportunities Assessment

6.1 We will monitor the application of this policy regularly to ensure that it is applied fairly and that access to the service is available to all. Along with access to our ASB services, we will report annually on the outcomes of this monitoring.

6.2 We know that domestic violence occurs in all communities and cultures and affects people of all ages. Our staff will act sensitively to the needs of individuals in the way that this policy and its associated procedures are applied.

7. Monitoring

7.1 Cases will be individually reviewed at Tenancy Compliance Officer's one to one meetings with their manager, to ensure that this policy is applied appropriately.

7.2 We will report on:

- The number of cases.
- The diversity profile of complainants and perpetrators.
- The location of incidents.
- Outcomes, for example: transfer, support provided.
- Customer Satisfaction.

We will use this information to inform our approach and use of resources.

8. Value for Money

8.2 Domestic abuse is the category of anti social behavior that represents the highest risk to the personal safety of residents. We have restructured and allocated sufficient resources to deal with this problem effectively. We have identified the following as areas of efficiency savings:

- Having available information on local services that offer temporary housing support and counselling.
- Utilising these agencies in our approach and as part of our action plans.
- Working at a strategic level with local authorities to provide services in an efficient manner.
- Taking part in Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, which bring all professionals involved around the table at one meeting.

9. Review

9.1 We will review this policy every 3 years or after changes in legislation, involving a specialist domestic abuse service provider and tenant service users.

Equalities Impact Assessment	TBA
Legal/Regulatory Framework	TSA Standards – Tenancy & Neighbourhood 1996 Housing Act Section 8.
Performance & Quality Framework	KLOE 6, KLOE 30
Associated Policies & Procedures and other documents	Repairs and maintenance policy Abandoned property policy Allocations policy Re-chargeable policy Complaints policy ASB Policy Trust Service Standards
Policy Category	Housing Management
Consultation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents' Committee/Focus Group • Affected Staff • Staff Council/Joint Staff Forum • Management Team • GX 	

