

Housing Options Domestic Abuse Policy

Our policy sets out how we will deal with domestic abuse affecting our customers and their families and how we will both support survivors of domestic abuse and hold perpetrators to account. This policy applies to all our customers and those living with them.

This policy supports the delivery of our strategic objective to meet our legal and regulatory requirements in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the new definition.

Definition

The Domestic Abuse Act created a statutory definition of domestic abuse which is:

Domestic abuse refers to abusive behaviours which take place between two people aged over 16 who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships; or have a child together; or are relatives.

The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act states that abuse can be a single incident, but is often a pattern of behaviours, and it takes many forms including:

- physical or sexual abuse.
- violent or threatening behaviour.
- controlling or coercive behaviour.
- economic abuse; and/or
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

The law recognises the impact of domestic abuse on those who are ‘personally connected’¹ and defines what is meant by this as:

“...intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child.”

There is no requirement for the victim and perpetrator to live in the same household.

Also, for the first time, the DA Act recognises that a child, under 18 years old, who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse

Abuse can affect anyone, regardless of sex, gender, age, sexuality, disability, or ethnicity. However, we recognize that domestic abuse disproportionately affects women as they are in the majority as survivors/victims and that having those characteristics may impact on how a person experiences domestic abuse.

¹ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Commitment to survivors

Don't suffer in silence – we are here to help you. We will speak to you in a sensitive way and will be non-judgmental.

Our customer commitment is that we will:

- Begin by believing what you tell us about the abuse,
- Provide any survivor of domestic abuse with housing options/homelessness advice and empower them to make choices so that they can identify the option that best meets their personal circumstances.
- Aim to keep you, the survivor of domestic abuse, safe by providing support information to the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse HUB and other support services that could help keep you safe.
- We understand if you are more comfortable talking to someone who is the same sex as you. You should let us know if you want to speak to someone of the same sex and we will arrange this for you if we can.
- We recognise that people from a minority background who may experience other forms of discrimination may find it even harder to ask for help.
- Where necessary, we will offer you the services of an interpreter. We will never expect family or friends to interpret for you.
- We will not share your information with anyone without your permission unless there are serious concerns for your safety, or the safety of any children or vulnerable adults. (See below for details of when and how we will share information)
- We will also agree if we need to speak with you again how we can do so in a way that is safe for you.
- Continually improve our response to domestic abuse by learning from survivor feedback and the feedback from a range of other agencies.
- We will hold you at the centre of all decisions made in relation to your housing and the work we do with the person who caused you harm.

Commitment to perpetrators of harm

If you, the perpetrator of abuse, are committed to change and accept responsibility for your harmful behaviour we will commit to helping you access appropriate support to change. We have a perpetrator pathway that will enable you to access accommodation if you continue to commit to change and engage with our behaviour change program.

Working in partnership

We will actively participate in relevant local partnerships where appropriate and we will work with specialist support agencies.

Where the risk threshold is met, we will liaise with the local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This is coordinated by Cheshire Police.

We will carry out the multi-agency action plan actions assigned to us by the MARAC. We will also ensure we understand our role and the correct processes to follow.

Support needs and vulnerability

- We can offer additional support such as money advice to survivors and members of their household where an additional support need is identified.
- We will make a child safeguarding referral to Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) when the need to protect a child/ children is identified or the domestic abuse is having a negative impact on the child.

Staff training, awareness, and support

We will ensure that all our staff are aware of their potential role in receiving reports of domestic abuse risks and concerns, and what they should do.

Our customer-facing staff will be trained to spot the signs of abuse and to be able to provide basic advice to survivors, including how customers can access help and support such as via the **Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub**.

Our staff will understand how to identify risk and the signs of escalating risks and will work with and refer to domestic abuse specialist services if your risks change.

Raising customer awareness

As part of our commitment to tackling domestic abuse, we will display information about domestic abuse in all our buildings across Cheshire East locations. We will ensure our website has information that is regularly reviewed.

Our customer facing staff will be:

- equipped to work with a trauma informed approach
- provided with Domestic Abuse training
- will commit to our approach to managing domestic abuse.

We will provide publicity in other languages to raise awareness of domestic abuse as the need is identified

Improving our services

We will record, monitor, and regularly review all cases of domestic abuse to ensure compliance with our commitment and procedures.

We will gather feedback from survivors who report domestic abuse, using this information to improve our services to future survivors.

Data protection and confidentiality

We will comply with our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 when dealing with domestic abuse cases. This includes sharing information with statutory agencies, MARAC information sharing arrangements and MARAC operating protocols.

We will share information where we are legally required to do so. We will talk through any decisions regarding information sharing with the customers. All information-sharing decisions will be recorded, including the reasons for that decision.

Contact for help and information

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub

- telephone: 0300 123 5101
- text: 07771 941 464
- email: cedah@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- for referrals use cedah@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Adult Safeguarding – out of hours

- telephone: 0300 123 5010 or 0300 123 5022

Children’s Safeguarding – out of hours

- telephone: 0300 123 5012 or 0300 123 5022

Housing options / homelessness team – out of hours

- telephone: 0300 123 5017 or 0300 123 5025

NCDV (Help with injunctions etc)

- telephone: 0800 970 2070

DV Assist (Help with injunctions etc)

- telephone: 0800 195 8699
- www.dvassist.org.uk

Police (24 hours - non urgent)

- telephone: 101

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

- telephone: 01260 697900

People who abuse and those who want to help them can get advice and support from **Respect Phonenumber**:

- Website: <http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk/>
- Email: info@respectphoneline.org.uk
- Phone 0808 802 4040 (office hours, free from landlines and most mobile phones)