Broadacres

Domestic Abuse Policy

2025 - 2028

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Introduction

Broadacres vision is to deliver an individual service which makes a real difference to people's lives.

We believe that our customers should not live in fear of violence, abuse or harassment from a partner, former partner or any other member of their household.

As a social housing landlord and employer, Broadacres recognises that it has a role to play in the safeguarding of its customers and colleagues, and in supporting local authorities and community safety providers to tackle such incidents and behaviour.

Aims

This policy aims to support our approach to dealing with domestic abuse by:

- treating people reporting domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way
- taking any disclosure of abuse seriously and giving advice and assistance as a priority
- agreeing a plan with the victim and where appropriate providing and carrying out home security checks to ensure safety measures and target hardening where required
- supporting those experiencing abuse, or who have experienced abuse, by working in partnership with any other support agencies
- ensuring that where children or young people are affected by domestic abuse, that they too have access to services as soon as possible
- signposting victims to where they can access help with the use of civil and criminal laws, to offer them protection and to prevent further abuse
- making appropriate safeguarding referrals if we believe that a child, or a vulnerable adult, is at risk due to an abusive relationship
- signposting perpetrators of domestic abuse to agencies who can offer them support, in order to prevent the abuse from reoccurring
- ensuring we take an intersectional approach to make sure that individual needs are met
- training all our colleagues to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and providing them with clear and practical guidance to act upon it
- publicising our approach, in all formats, to raise awareness amongst the communities we serve with the aim of increasing reports of domestic abuse
- adopting best practice in this area by maintaining the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) standard

- continually striving to improve our response to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls by seeking opportunities to receive feedback from victims and survivors and taking note of learnings from the Domestic Homicide Review process

How we will achieve our aims is set out more fully in our Domestic Abuse Procedure.

What is domestic abuse?

There is now a statutory definition of 'domestic abuse'. This policy uses an abridged version of the definition of domestic abuse provided by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if “A” and “B” are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other. “Personally connected” means:

- they are, or have been, married to each other
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- they are relatives and the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

It does not matter whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of actions, any behaviour of this kind is domestic abuse.

Coercive and controlling behaviour

In 2015 the Government announced a new domestic abuse offence of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support,

exploiting their resources and capabilities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

This law helps protect victims by outlawing sustained patterns of behaviour that stop short of serious physical violence, but amount to extreme psychological and emotional abuse. Victims of coercive behaviour can have every aspect of life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and humiliation.

Definitions of abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- physical
- sexual
- financial
- psychological
- emotional
- economic
- discriminatory
- stalking and harassment
- family and intergenerational abuse
- elder abuse
- honour based violence
- forced marriage
- female genital mutilation

Coercive and controlling behaviour underpins domestic abuse and is explained as a range of purposeful behaviours including intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse and manipulation. These behaviours are used in order to achieve power and control in an abusive relationship and reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse.

Further information can be found at Appendix 1.

Our approach

On receiving a report of domestic abuse directly from a victim, a face to face interview will be offered within 24 hours. Where possible same-sex interviews will be facilitated where requested.

Where this is not possible, due to it being a weekend or a bank holiday, the victim may be referred to a relevant support agency or interviewed on the next available working day.

Where requested by the victim, the interview may be carried out over the phone.

Where the report is from a third party such as the police, we will establish what information has already been provided and what support is required from Broadacres. Where appropriate we will arrange to interview the victim.

Interviews will be carried out in a sensitive and supportive manner where the victim's immediate housing options and tenancy rights will be discussed. A DASH risk assessment checklist will be completed and a referral to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) made if the threshold is met.

Further support and advice will be given, and the interview will conclude with a plan of action.

Partnership working

Broadacres recognises that dealing with domestic abuse is not the sole responsibility of any single agency. We are part of a wider community and share the problems and challenges of our community. Partnership working is vital if we are to deal effectively with the incidences and consequences of domestic abuse within our communities.

We work with a variety of partners including the police and local authorities and contribute to MARAC's. Broadacres are part of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the MARAC and Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) steering group.

Broadacres acknowledges that domestic abuse is often a factor in Child Protection and Serious Case Reviews and liaise with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to identify relevant training for colleagues specific to domestic abuse and safeguarding.

Broadacres also meets its obligations for safeguarding adults through membership of the Local Safeguarding Adults Group and our Safeguarding Adults Policy.

Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing

Whilst we respect privacy and confidentiality and are mindful of our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR), dealing with domestic abuse may require us to share information in order to:

- protect the victim
- prevent harm to someone else e.g. children or an adult at risk
- prevent or detect a crime

Legal and regulatory framework

The legal framework for dealing with domestic abuse is wide-ranging.

Some of the pieces of legislation we work with include:

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1988
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- The Care Act 2014
- Clare's Law (also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme)
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Broadacres make use of any appropriate tools and powers available to us as a housing provider to take action against perpetrators of domestic abuse. This may include the use of injunctions and possession proceedings. Any action taken by Broadacres will be based upon the victim's wishes, level of risk and professional judgement.

From 2014, police and magistrates have had powers to issue Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), which can prevent a perpetrator of domestic abuse from returning to a residence and having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. The use of DVPOs in relation to Broadacres customers, whether as victims or as perpetrators, will be overseen by the Community Safety Team or the Domestic Abuse Coordinator with support from the police and legal team.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was established to raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families. The Act aims to improve the effectiveness of the justice system by providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice. The Act also puts more onus on local authorities and housing providers to play a more active role in providing sustainable housing and to give homeless assistance and support for domestic abuse victims and their families.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to:

- create a statutory definition of domestic abuse
- emphasise that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive behaviour and economic abuse
- establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers
- bring about new powers including the Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and the Domestic Abuse Protection Order
- place a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation
- provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse will automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance
- stop perpetrators of domestic abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales
- extend the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse
- provide a statutory domestic abuse strategy for perpetrators
- place the guidance supporting the Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) on a statutory footing

Where possible Broadacres works jointly with Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS) and the local authorities to meet the aims of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, by providing emergency short-term accommodation and/or long-term and sustainable move on accommodation for customers who have experienced domestic abuse. Broadacres also provides accommodation-based support and resettlement support where appropriate.

Broadacres has been Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited since 2019, with the aim to provide our customers and colleagues with an exemplary response to domestic abuse. Our performance is reviewed regularly ensuring that we are meeting the standards and learning from good practice.

Monitoring and review

Overall responsibility for this policy rests with Broadacres Board of Management with day-to-day oversight being provided by the Management Team. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or in line with business needs or changes in regulation and/or legislation. Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to colleagues as a result of any changes.

We will use appropriate measures to monitor the impact of this policy including satisfaction levels and customer feedback.

Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS

Physical abuse

This can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation and choking.

Sexual abuse

This can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception and threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.

Financial abuse

This can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in the victim's name, not allowing the victim to have a say on how their monies are spent or refusing to allow them to work.

Psychological and emotional abuse

This type of abuse can have a profound impact on victims. It can leave them with little confidence that they can do anything to change their situation, or that they are powerless to take any action to improve their lives or the lives of their children. Examples include:

- isolating the victim - not allowing them to see their friends or family or to go anywhere on their own
- using threats - threats to kill their family, children, friends or pets, or to find them if they were ever to try and leave
- putting them down - humiliating, embarrassing or undermining them in front of others, for example, telling them that they are stupid, that no one would believe them if they tried to tell people what was happening or that they are a bad parent

Economic abuse

Economic abuse involves behaviours that interfere with an individual's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can be controlling or coercive. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety.

Examples of economic abuse include:

- having sole control of the family income
- preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits
- interfering with a victim's education, training or employment
- not allowing or controlling a victim's access to a mobile phone, transport, utilities and/or food
- damage to a victim's property

Discriminatory abuse

This type of abuse is motivated by oppressive and discriminatory attitude towards a person's:

- disability
- physical appearance
- learning disability
- mental ill health
- sensory impairment
- race
- religion
- gender / gender identity
- age
- culture
- sexual orientation
- appearance

Family and intergenerational abuse

Domestic abuse approaches have historically had an emphasis on partner violence. More focus is now being given to family and intergenerational abuse, and the way in which it may be different from partner violence e.g. if the perpetrator is the victim's (adult) sibling, child or grandchild. Abuse of an adult or child may also be used by a perpetrator to exercise control over their victim.

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This type of abuse can include physical, sexual, psychological and emotional, financial and material, abandonment, neglect and a serious loss of dignity and respect.

Honour based abuse

Honour based abuse is a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs

and/or honour. Abuse can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Honour based abuse can take many forms, e.g. threatening behaviour, assault, rape, kidnap, abduction, forced abortion and threats to kill.

Forced marriage

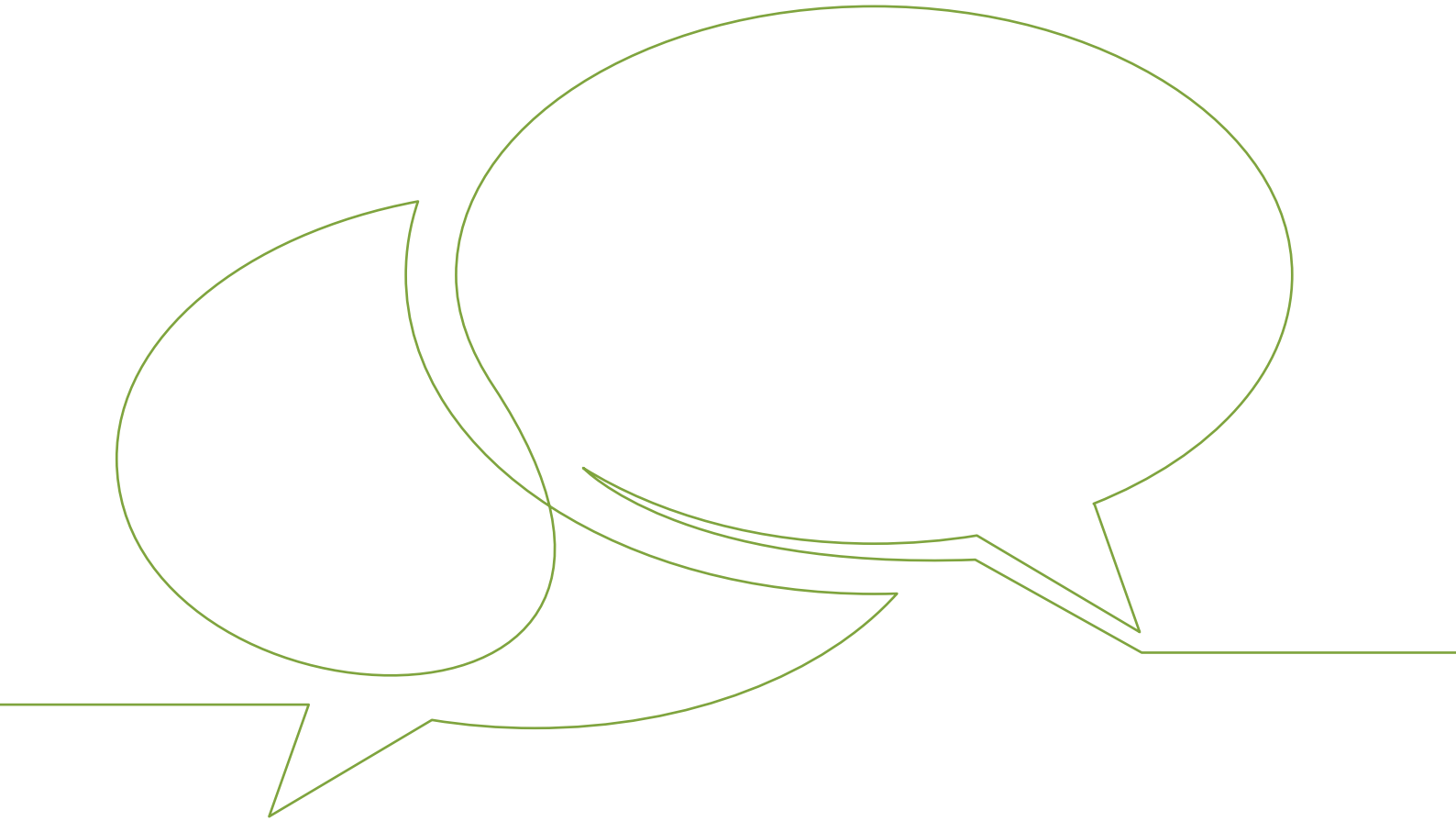
A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. Forcing someone to marry isn't always physical, but it is always against the law.

Female genital mutilation

The practice, which is traditional in some cultures, of partially or totally removing the external genitalia of girls and young women for non-medical reasons. It is illegal in many countries.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes the individual feel scared, distressed or threatened. There are different types of stalking and harassment, and anyone can be a victim. Stalking and harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Where stalking and harassment occurs, and the perpetrator and victim are 16 years old or over and “personally connected”, this behaviour falls within the scope of the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.



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