

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Domestic Abuse Policy

Review due: November 2028

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has a clear social and legislative responsibility to support customers who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse. This policy outlines our approach, which aims to ensure people feel supported and able to raise concerns. This policy supplements the Council's Safeguarding Policy and builds on the foundation of partnership working. It aims to prevent domestic abuse, empower victims/survivors and communities and support victims/survivors in their recovery. We recognise that experiences of domestic abuse are shaped by intersecting factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, and socio-economic circumstances, and we are committed to responding to these diverse needs in an inclusive and equitable way.
- 1.2 We have used the term 'victim/survivor' throughout this policy in line with current thinking that the term 'victim' alone can have negative connotations; however, the terms could also be considered as interchangeable. In using these terms, we also acknowledge that language may be experienced differently across communities and that individual preference will be respected.

2. Aim

2.1 This policy aims to ensure that:

- Housing staff are aware of the appropriate action to take if they become aware of domestic abuse.
- Housing staff know how to make appropriate safeguarding referrals for children and adults at risk in line with the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- We offer help without inadvertently re-traumatising the individual or their families.
- We will work in partnership with the police and other specialist agencies to obtain the best outcome for our customers.
- We are committed to continuous improvement and learning, ensuring that staff have access to up-to-date training, resources, and good practice. Staff are encouraged to use the Surrey [Domestic Abuse Training](#) offer to strengthen their knowledge and confidence in supporting victims/survivors.

3. Definitions, legislation and regulation

- 3.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The act also recognises the impact of domestic abuse on those who are 'personally connected.' There is no requirement for the victim and perpetrator to live in the same household. The Act also recognises that a child 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.
- 3.2 In line with this definition, we acknowledge that domestic abuse can affect people of all ages and identities, including LGBTQ+ individuals and older people, whose

experiences and barriers to support may be distinct and must be recognised in our response.

3.3 Violence against women and girls covers a range of offences that disproportionately affect women and girls. However, men and boys can also be victims/survivors of violence and abuse.

3.4 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 gives local authorities wider powers and greater accountability concerning the protection of domestic abuse victims/survivors. Surrey County Council has the primary duty to provide domestic abuse support to meet the needs of survivors and their children in safe accommodation. They also fund services in the community for victims/survivors living or working in Runnymede. The County Council has a statutory duty to co-ordinate activities to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and to conduct a needs assessment. Runnymede Borough Council has a duty to support this work.

3.5 The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards and Code of Practice state that landlords must have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse.

4. Policy statement

4.1 We are committed to the following principles when recognising and responding to domestic abuse:

- Our practice is underpinned by safety-led case management in order to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victims/survivors.
- A victim/survivor-led approach is taken when responding to incidents of domestic abuse by listening to victims/survivors' voices and respecting their choices.
- Sensitivity and empathy to the diverse needs of survivors of domestic abuse, recognising individual circumstances, identities and barriers to support.
- Raising awareness and ensuring Housing staff have the correct skills, knowledge and tools to effectively respond to domestic abuse through training, guidance and resources.
- Working in partnership with colleagues in the Council and with other agencies to secure the most effective response through co-ordinated, multi-agency working.

5. Policy details

5.1 Housing staff will receive appropriate, regular training and support to enable them to identify and raise concerns about domestic abuse and provide support to victims/survivors and where appropriate to perpetrators, neighbours and the wider community.

5.2 Housing staff and Council contractors will be made aware of domestic abuse procedures, including responding to survivors, making referrals to the appropriate organisation(s), making safeguarding referrals for children and adults at risk where appropriate and considering any impact on neighbours or the wider community.

- 5.3 Domestic abuse may come to the attention of Housing staff through direct disclosures from a resident, at a home visit or by way of potential indicators such as homelessness or risk of homelessness, damage to property, anti-social behaviour etc. Rent arrears or unexplained tenancy issues such as sudden changes in occupancy or reluctance to engage may also be signs of domestic abuse and will be treated with sensitivity and vigilance. If staff witnesses domestic abuse or suspects it is taking place, they must refer it to their line manager or safeguarding lead to decide the appropriate course of action.
- 5.4 We will help people to raise concerns about domestic abuse quickly, safely, and confidentially, so that telling us doesn't put them at further risk.
- 5.5 We will take a victim/survivor centred and risk-based approach to managing any ongoing threat of domestic abuse. We will agree actions with the survivor and be clear about what we can and cannot do. If a customer advises they are in imminent danger we will advise them to contact the police or we will do this on their behalf if they are unable to do so themselves. We may also help to arrange temporary accommodation if a survivor cannot safely stay in their home. Alongside any immediate action, we will support the development of a safety plan tailored to the victim/survivor's needs and circumstances. Housing staff are encouraged to seek advice and input from specialist domestic abuse support services to ensure best practice is followed and that victims/survivors receive appropriate, trauma-informed support.
- 5.6 We contribute funding for the provision of independent domestic abuse outreach services for specialist advocacy, emotional and practical support to victims and survivors and advice to professionals supporting them.
- 5.7 We will work towards [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#) (DAHA) accreditation.
- 5.8 Action we will consider taking:

Safety Measures

- Support with safety planning
- Carrying out work to improve the security of their home, such as changing locks or fitting alarms
- Ensure safety is paramount: security measures, refuge or temporary accommodation options if safety is compromised
- Completion of a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment
- Referral to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Not reducing our service in the future if the survivor decides to stay with the perpetrator, but working with them to mitigate risks where possible
- Protect confidentiality as far as possible
- Regularly updating survivors of our actions using their preferred method of contact.

Legal Remedies

- Encouraging victims/survivors to go to the Police
- Using legal powers (such as injunctions, restraining orders, or eviction notices) to protect survivors and manage perpetrators.

Support Referrals

- Provide initial help and support, including advice on the options available
- Assisting with alternative housing options
- Referral (with consent) or signposting to appropriate support agencies
- Safeguarding referral to Surrey Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH – Adults)
- Safeguarding referral to Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA)
- Ensure effective liaison with support workers/other agencies already engaged
- Learning from customer experience and feedback to help improve our approach.

5.8.1 Additional action we may consider if the survivor is a Runnymede Council tenant:

- Support to regain entry to a property and exclude a perpetrator
- Provide advice about ending a joint tenancy
- Management transfer to an alternative property
- Reciprocal rehousing agreement with another social landlord
- Ensuring perpetrators are solely accountable for any damages, rent arrears and antisocial behaviour they have caused
- Rehousing the perpetrator in line with homelessness regulations.

5.8.2 Additional action we may consider if the victim/survivor is not a Council tenant:

- Victims/survivors who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse have priority need for accommodation and eligible for assistance. In line with statutory guidance, the Council will consider the potential accommodation options for survivors on a case-by-case basis, taking into account their circumstances and needs
- Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that any accommodation provided is suitable for the survivor and their household, with staff being sensitive to any specific needs such as a requirement for single sex accommodation or particular location.

5.8.3 Dealing with perpetrators

In some cases it may be appropriate to signpost to specialist services people who disclose that they are perpetrators of domestic abuse. Other actions may include:

- Enforcement - A perpetrator may have committed a crime and the council will work in partnership with the Police in seeking to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. Action under anti-social behaviour legislation may also be pursued. If the perpetrator is a Council tenant, action may be taken for breach of their tenancy.
- Support - Supporting victims/survivors and ensuring they can live their lives safely is the Council's priority, however evidence shows that enforcement action alone is unlikely to change the behaviour of perpetrators so the Council will also consider referral to a behaviour change programme or similar support.

6. Consultation, communication and training

6.1 The development of this policy has included views from a range of stakeholders including staff, residents, statutory and support agencies. We are committed to maintaining ongoing engagement with victims/survivors and stakeholders to ensure their perspectives continue to inform our practice.

7. Monitoring and performance management

- 7.1 Housing services will record all reported instances of domestic abuse. Records will be protected and only accessible by those with the appropriate level of security. To protect the victim a report of Domestic Abuse will not be recorded within the file of a joint tenancy but within a separate Domestic Abuse case.
- 7.2 Case information will be recorded which enables repeat perpetrators to be identified and those who are known to be vulnerable to Domestic Abuse. The case management system for Domestic Abuse will be used to measure the success of intervention and enable monitoring of outcomes
- 7.3 We aim to review this policy in 3 years to ensure it reflects current legislation and latest examples of best practice.
- 7.4 Procedures for staff will be implemented and training provided to ensure the effective delivery of the policy. Cases will be confidentially recorded and monitored to enable reporting of the number of cases and effectiveness of outcomes to be reported to Housing committee, shared with stakeholders for learning and service improvement purposes; and to inform the next review of this policy.
- 7.5 All staff will receive training relevant to their roles.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 In producing this document an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out.
- 8.2 An EIA is a way of assessing the impact, or likely impact, that a particular policy, procedure or decision will have on particular groups. This is used to assess whether in making the decision whether the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) to; eliminate discrimination and any other conduct that is prohibited under this act and to advance equality between those who share a protected characteristic.
- 8.3 An Equality Impact Assessment screening was carried out to consider the likely impact of this policy on particular groups of people and to ensure compliance with the Council's public sector equality duty. The screening prompted a full Equality Impact Assessment which will inform staff training and procedures.

9. Related strategies/Documents

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
[Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#)
[Surrey Against Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029](#)
[Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy | Healthy Surrey](#)
[RBC Safeguarding Policy for Children and Adults at Risk \(Official\) - May 2023](#)
[Apply for Social Housing – Runnymede Borough Council](#)
[Data Protection – Runnymede Borough Council](#)

10. Further guidance and useful links

[How to get help | Healthy Surrey](#) (Domestic Abuse Support Services)

[Multi agency risk assessment conferences | Healthy Surrey](#) (Incl. how to make a referral)

[Anti Victim Blaming Guidance | Healthy Surrey](#)

[Domestic Abuse Training | Healthy Surrey](#)

[Worried about your own or someone else's abusive behaviour? | Healthy Surrey](#)

(Perpetrator Interventions)

[Report a concern about a child or young person - Surrey County Council](#)

[Reporting safeguarding concerns - Surrey County Council](#) (Adults)

11. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	October 25	First draft created	November 2025	Angela Horsey	Housing Committee