



Domestic Abuse (Customers) Policy

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POLICY SUMMARY

This Policy demonstrates EPIC's approach to recognising and identifying domestic abuse, as well as setting out our approach to supporting victims and taking action against perpetrators. The Home Office's [Statutory Guidance on domestic abuse](#) states that:

"It is vital that housing providers are able to recognise and respond to the signs of domestic abuse. Housing providers should employ professional curiosity when faced with all cases, even if domestic abuse is not immediately suspected. Abuse may manifest as multiple moves in quick succession; a refusal to let housing officers into the property; neighbour complaints or damage to property.

Housing officers should recognise the impact of wrongly criminalising victims in such instances and consider safety planning and specialist support for the victim if action is taken against the perpetrator".

1. APPLICABILITY

The Policy applies to EPIC's tenants, applicants, leaseholders and other residents within our properties, for the purposes of this policy referred to as customer. For staff experiencing domestic abuse, EPIC's Domestic Abuse Policy will apply.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

defines domestic abuse as follows:

"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, and
- the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse;
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct..."

Although it may be assumed that domestic abuse is typically caused by a male upon a female, it can occur through behaviour by a female to a male partner or from one same-sex partner upon another. It is potentially a serious criminal offence and is often a hidden crime that is frequently not reported to the Police. Therefore, statistics can only provide a partial picture of the actual levels of domestic abuse. It usually takes place primarily in the home. As a landlord, we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and play an important role in supporting those who have experienced or been affected by it.

3. CONTEXT

Our approach towards tackling domestic abuse will consist of two main aspects: (1) primarily the welfare and well-being of the victim, and (2) ensuring appropriate action is taken against the perpetrator by enforcing tenancy conditions where appropriate.

When we deal with reports of domestic abuse involving a vulnerable adult and/or where children are affected, we will also refer to our Safeguarding Policy. This will involve reporting actual or suspected incidents to the relevant safeguarding agencies.

4. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Firstly, we recognise and uphold that everyone has a right to live without abuse and violence.

As a small organisation, we may not have the required experience and resources to fully support victims and perpetrators. Where appropriate, we will refer/signpost tenants to specialist organisations, examples of which are listed in section 12 below. Both in supporting a victim and taking action against a perpetrator, where necessary we will work in partnership with relevant statutory and voluntary organisations.

We will obtain the consent of victims before we notify other agencies. However, in accordance with the Care Act 2014, we have a legal duty to share information with an appropriate agency where there are overriding and serious concerns about a person's health or safety. This includes where a victim's health and well-being is under imminent threat or where an issue of safeguarding children or vulnerable adults is present.

5. SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

We will be courteous and sympathetic in our dealings with the victim and, unless evidence to the contrary is found, we will accept their version of events whilst we carry out our enquiries. We will adopt a victim-centred approach in whichever support or enforcement-based measures we take and place the victim at the centre of our decision-making process.

In appropriate circumstances, we will assist victims with rehousing options, either on a temporary or permanent basis. For more information about rehousing to another EPIC property, refer to our Allocations Policy. When supporting a victim, we will also assist, as far as possible, if they are in any financial difficulties and signpost/refer in areas we are unable to help (e.g., specialist debt or independent legal advice).

6. LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE PERPETRATOR

Before taking any enforcement action against a perpetrator, whether tenancy-related or otherwise, we will discuss the options with the victim. Examples of actions we will take are seeking possession of a property (through Grounds 12, 14 and 14A of the 1988 Housing Act) or obtaining a county court injunction.

For further details of legal and non-legal remedies that we may use, we should refer to our Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Enforcement Policy and our Tenancy Enforcement Procedure.

To assist us in taking any legal proceedings, we may request details of proceedings taken by the Police. The Police are empowered to take criminal proceedings (such as under the Crime & Security Act 2010 – including issuing Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders). The Police or independent legal advice agencies may assist victims in issuing civil proceedings (such as occupation orders and non-molestation orders, under the Family Law Act 1996).

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders across EPIC are detailed below.

- The Executive Team is responsible for approving this Policy.
- The Director of Housing Management is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effective and in line with legislation.
- The Housing Manager is responsible for:
 - Developing and implementing operational procedures to deliver the policy objectives.
 - Embedding the policy through staff training, learning and development.
 - Monitoring the overall effectiveness of the policy, cost, quality and time.
 - Reporting to the Executive Team on the operational effectiveness of the policy.
 - Evaluating, amending, and enhancing the delivery of the policy.
- Housing Officers will carry out the support or enforcement-based actions as required.
- All staff who engage with customers and who recognise signs of domestic abuse have a responsibility to raise issues and seek guidance from their line manager, should they require any clarification or support.

8. TRAINING

We will ensure our staff receive appropriate training and awareness of domestic abuse periodically. This may be sourced from external providers or within EPIC.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all. We are opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any unjustifiable criteria. We are committed to developing a culture that values people from all sections of society and the contribution which each individual can make. We will ensure our approach to accessing properties is considerate to people's individual needs. We also adhere to the Equality Act 2010.

EPIC Housing recognises that some people experience disadvantages due to their socio-economic circumstances and will strive to ensure no person or group of persons is treated with injustice due to their personal circumstances. EH will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation and will make sure the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998) will be adhered to.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy and there is no evidence of potentially unlawful discrimination and all reasonable opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations have been taken, subject to continuing monitoring and review.

10. ASSOCIATED EPIC DOCUMENTS/POLICIES

Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Enforcement Policy
Assignment, Mutual Exchange & Succession Policy
Domestic Abuse Policy (relating to EPIC employees)
Safeguarding Policy
Tenancy Agreement
Tenancy Enforcement Procedure

11. MONITORING / REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. A review may be conducted earlier if there are significant changes to either legislation or EPIC's operating practices.

12.SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS (at the time of writing which is not exhaustive and subject to change)

- <https://www.new-era.uk/> – the holistic Domestic Abuse service operating across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent since 2018.
- <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/>
- <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/>
- <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/>
- <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>
- <https://www.respect.uk.net/>
- <https://www.staffordshirewomensaid.org/>

Version Control

Date of Review	Reviewer	Version Number	Changes	Date of Next Review	Approved By
July 2024	Housing Manager	V1.0	New Policy	September 2026	Executive Team