

# Domestic Abuse Policy

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out how Hastoe will take steps to assist and support any person experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse, it applies to all customers including those living with our tenants.
- 1.2. Domestic abuse is still largely a hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
- 1.3. As a housing provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is absolutely essential that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the victim to offer support.
- 1.4. We recognise that we are not the lead agency in dealing with issues of domestic abuse. Our role is to support customers in relation to their housing options and to refer or signpost customers for specialist support services.
- 1.5. In addition, we will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.
- 1.6. There are also some links with the following related policies and procedures:
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Safeguarding Procedure

## 2 Background

2.1 The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

*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. This can encompass, but it is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.*

## 3. Coercive and Controlling Behaviour

- 3.1. In 2014 the Government announced a new domestic abuse offence of coercive and controlling behavior.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. Controlling behaviour include 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.
- 3.4. 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.

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Victims of coercive control can have every aspect of their life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and humiliation.

## 4. Definitions of Abuse

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

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional
- Discriminatory

4.2 The definition includes honour based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of self-esteem to loss of life

4.3 **Physical Abuse** can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.

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

4.5 **Financial Abuse** can include: controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow them to study or work.

4.6 **Psychological and Emotional Violence and Abuse** has a profound impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with so little confidence that they are unable to change the situation. Examples include: Creating isolation, Use of threats, Putting them down.

4.7 **Discriminatory Abuse** (with reference to forced marriage) may manifest itself as any of the other categories of abuse, however what makes discriminatory abuse distinctive is it is motivated by oppressive and discriminatory attitudes towards a person. Examples include: Disability, Physical appearance, Learning Disability, Mental ill-health, Sensory impairment, Race, Religion, Gender/gender identity, Age, Culture, Sexual Orientation, Appearance.

4.8 **Family and Inter-generational Abuse.** Focus is required to address family and inter-generational abuse, and how it differs from partner abuse, for example if the perpetrator is the victim's teenage or adult sibling, child or grand-child. Careful consideration is required when dealing with family and inter-generational abuse due to the complexities of family composition and safeguarding implications.

4.9 **Elder Abuse.** Research has found that domestic abuse is experienced by both women and men regardless of age, disability and ethnic background. Elder abuse can be even more detrimental to a victim's wellbeing due to problems with mobility, mental health and social isolation.

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## 5. Wellbeing

5.1 The Care Act 2014 specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a key part of a person's wellbeing. The guidance outlines that abuse takes many forms, and practitioners should not be constrained in their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect. It describes numerous types of abuse including: Domestic violence, Psychological abuse, Financial and material abuse, Sexual abuse, Physical abuse.

## 6. Making the link to Safeguarding

6.1 Staff should always make a Safeguarding Adults referral even if is just for information so that agencies are mindful of our concerns, as there may be other issues that we are not aware of.

6.2 In domestic abuse cases where children are present staff have a duty to involve Children's Services to ensure any children are adequately safeguarded. This can be done by making a Safeguarding Referral to Social Services.

## 7. Policy

### Approach to victims

7.1 At Hastoe, we believe that our customers and householders should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner or any other member of their household.

7.2 We operate a victim centred approach to domestic abuse and will work with those affected, often in a multi-agency response to implement sustainable outcomes. Victims of domestic abuse will be treated in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way.

7.3 By way of signposting and referring to the appropriate agencies, we will:

- Advise people experiencing domestic abuse to gain access to appropriate services as early as possible and are given advice to allow them to make choices about what to do next.
- Support people who are/have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- Provide guidance to children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse, so that they have access to services as early as possible.
- Advise victims to employ the use of civil and criminal laws which can offer them protection and also act as a preventative measure to avoid further abuse.
- Ensure that people experiencing abuse are not deterred from reporting it.

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- Follow the Safeguarding Procedure if we believe a vulnerable adult or child is at risk due to an abusive relationship.

## Approach to perpetrators

- We do not condone under any measures the perpetration of domestic abuse. We will support victim-survivors to pursue criminal remedies or civil action with the appropriate agencies and as appropriate to the victim. These can include but not limited to; Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN); Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO); Injunctions; Non-molestation orders.
- In addition, where perpetrators have expressed an aim to change their behaviours, we will make referrals into appropriate services and support access to these services.

## 8. Aims

8.1 This policy aims to achieve the following:

- We will promote the welfare of all victims of domestic abuse who come into contact with Hastoe.
- Create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse feel they can approach us, are encouraged to talk and are listened to, thus enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and live more independently.
- Provide timely and effective guidance by working in partnership with relevant agencies to respond to any cases of abuse that may arise. We seek to enhance the safety and security of those involved and also support them to increase their confidence, resilience and empower themselves to live independently.
- Provide employees with clear and practical guidance to ensure we support and protect victims of abuse, allowing victims to have more information about their choices so that they feel empowered to fulfil their ambitions.
- Refer or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse to support services to support them in changing their behaviour.

## 9. Training

9.1 We recognise that our own staff will require support and guidance in dealing with cases of domestic abuse. We will ensure that all staff are supported by their managers to deliver the aims and objectives of this policy. We will periodically arrange training for front line staff dealing with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse

9.2 Our in house Safeguarding lead will have additional training to:-

- Provide guidance and support on difficult cases
- Escalate referrals as appropriate

9.3 We will also ensure that our staff are trained to:-

- Recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse
- Recognise the impact domestic abuse has on the individual, the family and the community

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- React by taking action to reduce harm and increase safety

### **10. Review**

- 10.1 This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of Hastoe and is in line with current legislation.
- 10.2 Managers will review domestic abuse cases to ensure that staff have adhered to the policy and procedure and where possible service improvements for any lessons learned on cases