

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

Policy Title:	Domestic Violence and Abuse		
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Associated Group policies:	ASB Policy, Safeguarding Adults and Children Policy, Allocations Policy, Hate Behaviour Policy		
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This policy sets out our approach when responding to customers of Equity Housing Group who report domestic violence and abuse.
- 1.2. In line with Government guidance and legislation, we will take a victim centered approach to dealing with domestic violence and abuse and we will give practical advice and assistance. Where necessary we will signpost victims to specialist agencies who may be better placed than ourselves to provide a solution for our customers.
- 1.3. Where appropriate we will consider the use of any legal enforcement action available to us, to effectively deal with perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Equity Housing Group have adopted the government definition of domestic violence and abuse, which is:
- 2.2. "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 abuse can encompass but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse".

3. LEGAL & REGULATORY CONTEXT

- 3.1. Serious Crime Act 2015, Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 as amended 2012. The Crime and Disorder Act 1997, The Protection from Harassment Act 1997, The Family Law Act 1996 Part IV, Homelessness Act 2002 – May 2002, The Children Act 1989, ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014, Housing Act 1996, Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1998.

4. POLICY SUMMARY

- 4.1. Equity Housing Group will take all reports of domestic violence and abuse seriously and will seek to work positively and proactively with the victim, to find an appropriate solution to reported cases of violence or abuse.

5. POLICY DETAIL

- 5.1. We will enable residents to report domestic violence and abuse to us in different ways including in person, in writing, by telephone, online or via a third party such as a police officer or IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate). DVA cases will be categorized as Category A under our ASB Policy and therefore the initial response time is 1 working day.
- 5.2. We will actively promote awareness of domestic violence and abuse amongst colleagues, customers and contractors and will encourage reporting from witnesses.
- 5.3. We will ensure that any customer(s) experiencing domestic violence abuse will be treated in a supportive manner, treating all domestic abuse cases seriously and with a high priority.
- 5.4. Evidence of abuse is not required for us to assist in any case and victims will be treated in a sensitive and empathic manner.
- 5.5. We will treat information we receive in confidence and will seek consent before sharing information. However, we will share relevant personal information where individuals are at risk or there is a safeguarding concern.
- 5.6. We will carry out a risk assessment in all reported cases and will share information where appropriate with the multi-agency risk conference.
- 5.7. We will ensure that customers, colleagues and partners are aware of our Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy.

- 5.8. We will ensure colleagues are provided with guidance and training so they are equipped to deal with reports of domestic violence and abuse.
- 5.9. We will liaise with police to assist them to fulfill their obligation to protect the lives of adults and children at risk of domestic violence and abuse.
- 5.10. We will adopt a multi-agency approach to resolve the issues so that the victim(s) can remain safely in their property or can be rehoused in alternative accommodation.
- 5.11. We will signpost customers to other agencies who will be able to offer specialist help, advice and support.
- 5.12. We will ensure robust monitoring systems are in place to monitor the progress of reports.
- 5.13. We will signpost offer support and guidance to perpetrators of domestic abuse where appropriate.
- 5.14. We will provide improved security to a victim's home (e.g. security lights, window locks) where a need is identified.
- 5.15. We will take legal enforcement action where appropriate.
- 5.16. In accordance with our Equality and Diversity policy, we will ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. All Domestic Violence and Abuse Cases will initially be managed by the ASB Specialist Team who will work collaboratively with the Customer Relationship Managers.

7. ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES

- 7.1. Domestic Violence and Abuse Procedure, ASB Procedure, Safeguarding Adults and Children Procedure, Hate Behaviour Procedure.

8. REVIEW

- 8.1. This policy will be reviewed bi annually by the ASB Specialist to ensure that it is fit for purpose.