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# Domestic Abuse Policy 2022–2025

If you would like this document in an accessible format then please contact:

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## 1. SECTION ONE: POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. We believe that no person should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy sets out our commitment to take efficient and effective action to deal with all reports of incidents of domestic abuse. It explains how we will provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with specialist services to provide a coordinated response.
- 1.2. We aim to improve the safety of people affected by domestic abuse and prevent further incidents by encouraging earlier reporting and responding rapidly. You can report domestic abuse to us through any contact you have with us, for example, through our website, by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. If you are in an emergency situation, you should always call the police on 999.
- 1.3. We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and employ staff trained to deal with reports of domestic abuse. We will always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgmental way.
- 1.4. We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will hold perpetrators of abuse to account. Our approach is survivor-centred and we will take into account the views and ongoing safety of the individual when deciding the most appropriate course of action.
- 1.5. If you have any queries about this policy or our approach to domestic abuse, you should contact the Directorate Specialist, Technical Services, who oversees our response to domestic abuse, with support from other employees across our services. This is currently Caroline Wiggins [cwiggins@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:cwiggins@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## 2. SECTION TWO: INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Context

- 2.1.1. The policy applies to all residents of Epping Forest District Council. We will use the range of tools, powers and support available - which may vary based on the circumstances of the individuals involved and the type of tenure they have. We will be fair and equitable in the services we provide and the tools, powers and support measures we consider.
- 2.1.2. Epping Forest District Council has defined duties and powers, and provides support services around Domestic Abuse available for all residents. We also cooperate with Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic abuse Board (SETDAB) - the overall lead for Domestic Abuse partnerships in the county.
- 2.1.3. We are a Local Housing Authority. This means we have specific duties to help people in housing need due to Domestic Abuse.
- 2.1.4. We are a stockholding authority with landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities that apply to residents living in Council accommodation.
- 2.1.5. Other registered providers of social housing in the District will also have Domestic Abuse related conditions within their tenancy agreements and have a duty to co-operate with us.
- 2.1.6. This Domestic Abuse Policy (the 'Policy') is effective from **April 2023**

## 2.2. Purpose

2.2.1. The policy sets out our commitment to take efficient and effective action to deal with all reports of incidents of domestic abuse. It explains that we will take them seriously and provide support tailored to the needs of the individual and their children. Working across services and with partners we will:

- ensure survivors are supported
- perpetrators recognise their behaviour and seek help to change that

2.2.2. We have a separate Employee Domestic Abuse Support Policy.

## 2.3. Definition

2.3.1. Within the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) and this policy, domestic abuse is defined as:

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

2.3.2. The definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

2.3.3. Economic abuse is any behaviour that has an adverse effect on a person's ability to do either to:

- acquire, use or maintain money or other property
- obtain goods or services.

It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

2.3.4. For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. This means people who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners
- have agreed to marry (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- are relative/parents

2.3.5. Children under 18 are also recognised as survivors in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator.

## 3. SECTION THREE: POLICY DETAILS

### 3.1. Reporting domestic abuse

3.1.1. You can report domestic abuse to us through any contact you have with us, for example, through our website, by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. We ensure anyone

can report domestic abuse to us, providing interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed.

- 3.1.2. If you report a case of domestic abuse, we will aim to respond within a one working day and will liaise with you about next steps.
- 3.1.3. Once you have reported domestic abuse, we will consider your situation and preferences when selecting an employee to assist you. For example, we will offer the option of being interviewed by an employee of the gender requested by you.
- 3.1.4. We will agree the method of contact you wish us to use when communicating with you. This includes talking to us over the phone, through an online video call, at our offices or another safe venue.
- 3.1.5. We will carry out a risk assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH 2009 risk model) which is a UK- wide accredited form to plan how we will support the survivor and any children.
- 3.1.6. We will base our support on your individual needs. We recognise that not all people see themselves as victims so we will make sure that these labels are not associated with you. We will always be sympathetic and supportive.
- 3.1.7. We will use the full range of remedies as appropriate, considering each case individually. We will advise about possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with it longer term. We will not pressure survivors to take legal action but will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. This may include helping to get legal advice about a non-molestation order, demotion of tenancy or possession proceedings.
- 3.1.8. We will provide relevant advice and help, including information about alternative housing, additional security measures in the home and suitable support from specialist organisations (such as Changing Pathways, Next Chapter or Finding Legal options for Women Survivors (Flows) [flows.org.uk](https://flows.org.uk)).
- 3.1.9. We recognise that housing is one of the main reasons why survivors do not leave abusive homes. If you fear for your immediate safety, we will work in partnership with the relevant local authority and others to consider your housing options.
- 3.1.10. If you need to move home, we will work with you to identify areas that will minimise the risk of future abuse. We will also continue to take action against the perpetrator where relevant.
- 3.1.11. A significant number of adults or children who experience domestic abuse will require safeguarding. Employees are trained to be aware of this and to make safeguarding referrals as needed in line with our safeguarding policy.
- 3.1.12. We will keep all cases of domestic abuse under review until the survivor is satisfied it's been resolved.
- 3.1.13. Whilst we are dealing with the case and after it has been resolved we will provide support for survivors, their families and witnesses to make sure they feel safe in their homes and community.

**3.2. Raising awareness**

- 3.2.1. We will widely publicise information to raise awareness of domestic abuse, telling our customers how to get help if they need it and the type of response they can expect from us. We will also support national campaigns to increase awareness.
- 3.2.2. We will carry out a rolling programme of employee training to make sure domestic abuse is always at the forefront of our minds. Our employees are trained to spot signs of domestic abuse when working in homes or having conversations with customers. They are aware of how to act and report concerns confidently and sensitively, such as through our Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy.

**4. SECTION FOUR: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

- 4.1. We work in collaboration with relevant agencies when responding to incidents of domestic abuse.
- 4.2. We will maintain strong partnership working with local agencies and will share information through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Essex Police.
- 4.3. We will refer survivors to relevant support agencies dealing with financial and legal advice.
- 4.4. We will work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

**5. SECTION FIVE: GENERAL DUTIES**

**5.1. Privacy**

- 5.1.1. We respect customers' right to privacy. We collect and process a lot of personal information and we have a duty to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 when storing or using that data.
- 5.1.2. Information provided will be securely held by the Council and will only be accessed by authorised persons with appropriate access controls. The Council will only use this information for the purposes set out in this Policy, unless you have given your consent, or it is required or permitted by law, as in the case of a safeguarding issue or prevention/detection of crime.
- 5.1.3. Full details are set out in our [Privacy Policy](#).
- 5.1.4. If you have any questions or concerns about Privacy, please contact:  
Data Protection Officer,  
Epping Forest District Council,  
Civic Offices, High Street,  
Epping,  
Essex,  
CM16 4BZ.  
(01992) 564180  
[dataprotection@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)



## 5.2. Safeguarding

- 5.2.1. We have a duty to work together with other professionals in promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support, and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.
- 5.2.2. If you have any concerns about the welfare of a child please contact [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#).
- 5.2.3. If you have any concerns about the welfare of an adult, please contact [Essex Safeguarding Adults Board](#).
- 5.2.4. Full details of our Safeguarding role and responsibilities are set out in our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

## 5.3. Information Sharing

- 5.3.1. When working with other organisations we may need to share some information about the case and individuals. We will only share information with the survivor's permission, unless:
- there is a risk to the safeguarding of children or a vulnerable adult, and it is a duty of care
  - if agencies such as the police request personal data as part of their own investigation.

In these cases, the Safeguarding Team will assess the sharing of data on a case-by-case basis.

## 5.4. Equality and Diversity

- 5.4.1. We have carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment of the Policy in accordance with our public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010.

When making decisions we will have due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
  - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 5.4.2. We will make sure our services are accessible. This includes providing different ways to report domestic abuse, arranging interpreters, and translating information into other languages or formats. This ensures we do not create additional barriers and that everyone can access our services in the way they need.
- 5.4.3. We recognise survivors' experiences may be partly defined by background, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion or beliefs ethnic group or immigration status. We understand that some may face discrimination and we will consider the individual needs of each survivor when tailoring our approach.
- 5.4.4. Although domestic abuse can affect anyone, certain people may be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups will experience specific forms of domestic abuse. We also understand there are cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will take all of this into account in the support we provide.

5.4.5. We will train employees to understand how domestic abuse affects individuals differently and work with specialist providers to make sure survivors get the right support.

#### 5.5. **Complaints and Appeals**

5.5.1. We appreciate that sometimes things can go wrong. If there is a problem please tell us or contact the Council's [Complaints officer](#) via our website, by telephoning the Contact Centre on 01992 564000 or writing to:

Complaints Officer  
Contact Centre  
Civic Offices  
High Street  
Epping,  
Essex CM16 4BZ

5.5.2. We can investigate and put things right where necessary, and if you remain dissatisfied you can contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) (or the [Housing Ombudsman](#) if you are a Council or Housing Association tenant.)

### 6. **SECTION SIX: CONSULTATION APPROVAL AND REVIEW**

#### 6.1. **Consultation**

We value the views of our customers and ask for feedback about our policies and the service we provide. We will do this in a number of different ways, including through working groups and informal conversations.

Our Tenant and Leaseholder Panel reviewed the Policy on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and we will continue to listen to feedback and use it to improve we work when dealing with domestic abuse.

#### 6.2. **Approval**

The responsible officer for the Policy is: **Directorate Specialist-Technical Services**  
The policy was approved by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

#### 6.3. **Review**

The policy will be fully reviewed annually. We will regularly consider best practice, changes to legislation and feedback from our employees and customers, and review some or all of the policy more frequently if required.

The next full review is due by April 2024

7. SECTION SEVEN: GLOSSARY

Here is an alphabetical list of words and their meaning as they appear in this policy

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Meaning within this document</b>
Duties	Actions that the Council is required to take, set by UK laws or Government regulation
Equitable	Providing a fair, reasonable service to all residents
Perpetrator	A person who carries out an act of domestic abuse
Regulatory requirements	Rules or regulations issued by the government or other regulatory organisation such as the Regulator of Social Housing
Residents	People who live in Epping Forest District
Safeguarding	Protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm
Statutory requirements	Laws covering certain actions that the Council must take
Survivor	Anyone who has experienced domestic abuse
Tenant and Leaseholder Panel	Group of Council and Housing Association tenants, leaseholders and homeowners living on Council or mixed tenure estates. They give us their views and influence decisions about the delivery of housing across the district
Tenure	The housing arrangement - home ownership, renting from the Council, renting from a Housing Association, renting in the private sector, living with friends or family, homeless etc
The Council	Epping Forest District Council
The County	Essex County Council
The District	The District of Epping Forest
The Policy	This Domestic Abuse Policy
Zero-tolerance	Our refusal to condone any acts of domestic abuse

8. SECTION EIGHT: LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Domestic Abuse Policy supports the relevant parts of the following local and national legislation, regulation, strategies, policies and other information.

Context	Specific reference material
<b>Corporate Strategy</b>	This policy supports Epping Forest District Council’s Corporate Strategy objectives.
<b>Regulatory Standards</b>	This policy supports the Neighborhood and Community Standard, which states that ‘Registered providers shall publish a policy on how they work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle ASB in areas where they own properties. We have a specialised approach to dealing with domestic abuse, working in partnership to support individuals.
<b>Legislation</b>	<p>This policy supports the following legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003</li> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014</li> <li>• Care Act 2014</li> <li>• Crime and Security Act 2010</li> <li>• Data Protection Act 2018</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Act 2021</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004</li> <li>• Equality Act 2010</li> <li>• Housing Act 1996</li> <li>• Local Government Act 1972</li> <li>• Policing and Crime Act 2009</li> <li>• Protection from Harassment Act 1997</li> <li>• Serious Crime Act 2015</li> </ul>
<b>Related policies</b>	<p>This policy is linked to the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocations Scheme 2022-2027</li> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy</li> <li>• Customer Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Employee Domestic Abuse Support Policy</li> <li>• Housing Rents Policy 2020</li> <li>• Income Recovery Policy 2020</li> <li>• Privacy Policy</li> <li>• Planned Maintenance Policy</li> <li>• Repairs Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Tenancy Policy 2022-202.</li> <li>• Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures (Confidential Reporting)</li> </ul>

<b>Related strategies</b>	<p>This policy is linked to the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Strategy</li> <li>• SETDAB Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2025)</li> <li>• Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 -2027</li> <li>• Housing Strategy 2022-2027</li> </ul>
<b>Related documents</b>	<p>This policy is linked to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding procedure</li> <li>• Epping Forest District Council Tenancy Agreements</li> </ul>

9. **SECTION NINE: VERSION CONTROL**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Details of changes included in update</b>	<b>Author</b>
V00.01	01.06.22	Draft policy	C.Wiggins
V00.02	31.08.22	Reproduced in standard format	C.Wright
V00.03	09.09.22	Updated draft with standard policy information	J Nuth
V00.04	13.03.23	Final Policy	C Wiggins