



Domestic Abuse

1. Aim and scope of policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are given the right advice and support to minimise the risk of further domestic abuse or domestic homicide.

It sets out how we will work with our customers who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. Our customers include tenants and household members across all tenures. This policy also covers our approach to managing perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can touch lives in different ways so all staff should have an awareness, how to recognise possible domestic abuse and what action to take. The policy is primarily for front line staff who have close contact with customers, such as the teams within the Customer Operations Directorate.

2. Definitions

Domestic Abuse (DA) is when one person is 'abusive' towards another person who they are 'personally connected' to, and both people are aged 16 or over. This can be one single incident or on-going behaviour.

'Abuse' can be any of these behaviours;

- Physical or sexual abuse.
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Economic abuse (where the behaviour prevents or hampers their ability to get, use or keep money or property, or obtain goods and services)
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

'Personally connected' means that the two people are:

- they are, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- they have agreed to marry one another or have entered into a civil partnership agreement (even if it didn't go ahead)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they are or have been parents or guardians to the same child
- they are relatives

The full legal definition can be found [here](#)

Victim and survivor – these terms are used to describe people directly affected by domestic abuse, including those who have witnessed it. In this policy, we will use the term victim.

3. Our Approach

- 3.1 Our approach is to treat victims in a sensitive, supportive and non-judgemental way. We will believe victims and treat disclosures seriously.
- 3.2 We'll treat any information as confidential unless we need to share the information with other agencies to keep people safe.
- 3.3 Domestic abuse can affect people from across all society, including women, men, people who identify as LGBTQ+, young people, older people, people with disabilities, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. We realise that people have different beliefs and different life experiences and so will have different needs. We'll treat people as individuals and promote inclusivity in our service delivery.
- 3.4 We recognise that victims face many difficult decisions on a daily basis and that leaving an abusive relationship is not as easy as walking out of the door. We'll give victims time and space, and not pressure them into making decisions or taking action.
- 3.5 We'll prioritise cases involving domestic abuse to help keep customers safe, including victim contact, case management, additional security requests, tenancy changes and alternative accommodation requests.
- 3.6 We are aware of the damaging effect on children and young people of witnessing and growing up in a family affected by domestic abuse. We realise that young people themselves can be victims of domestic abuse. We'll refer to our Safeguarding policy and work with other agencies to help keep children and young people safe.
- 3.7 We recognise that access to safe accommodation plays an important part in reducing the risk to victims and their families, but housing is not the solution on its own. We are part of a framework of agencies working together and using their individual powers to help keep victims safe, manage and look to prevent domestic abuse.
- 3.8 We'll aim to include the voice and experiences of victims when shaping and reviewing our services.

4. Our Policy

4.1 Case Management

- We'll treat disclosures of DA as a priority and contact victims the same working day.
- We'll take disclosures of DA from victims, friends and family, neighbours, VIVID staff and other agencies.
- We'll carry out risk assessments and make referrals using local DA referral pathways.
- We'll signpost victims to local and national organisations to help them with support and legal advice.
- We'll keep clear and up to date records of what is disclosed to us and when, and what action we have taken

4.2 Keeping customers safe

We'll offer additional security in their VIVID home to help keep victims and families safe:

- Home security, such as bolts, locks, window alarms, safe rooms, security lights, CCTV doorbells, sanctuary rooms
- Personal safety equipment like safe phones, personal alarms
- Referrals to phone monitoring services

4.3 Accommodation:

- We'll identify new customers coming into the organisation who have been affected by DA and offer them support to help them to feel safe in their new home, such as referrals to counselling, DA support, our in-house tenancy support service and additional security measures in their home.
- We'll support the victim to stay safe in their home and prioritise tenancy change applications.
- We'll offer independent mediation to help joint tenants communicate safely and agree to 'remove' one person from the tenancy, when appropriate.
- We'll support the victim's decision to move, if it is not possible for the victim to stay safe at home.
- We'll work with local authorities to ensure the victim moves quickly to a safe property with the same tenancy tenure, where possible.

4.4 Financial support

- We'll give customers a 'breathing space' from income court action when a disclosure is made, for between 1 and 3 months.
- We'll offer money and benefit advice specific to customers experiencing DA, leaving a DA relationship or experiencing financial abuse.
- We'll offer help those in need with food vouchers, utility bills and help with buying essential household items.
- We'll provide white goods and essential furniture if a customer needs them when setting up a new home after fleeing DA.

4.5 Working with perpetrators:

- We'll hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and take tenancy enforcement action, where appropriate and safe to do. We'll consider the views of the victim in this.
- We'll refer perpetrators who want to engage and change their behaviour to specialist support, acknowledging that perpetrators can be victims of previous abuse themselves.

4.6 Voice of victims

- We'll respect the experiences of victims and use their feedback to improve and shape our services.
- We'll be sensitive to the situation of the victim and recognise that asking for feedback may not always be appropriate or safe.
- We'll work with DA support services and charities to provide best practice examples and feedback on policy and procedures.

4.7 Staff training:

- We'll give DA awareness training for all new and existing staff.
- We'll give regular in-depth training for staff who have regular close contact with customers.

4.8 Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

- We'll work as part of a coordinated community response to domestic abuse.
- We'll work collaboratively with local agencies and domestic abuse forums to share information and to meet the needs of the individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse.
- We'll work with agencies to help keep children safe, recognising that children are at a greater risk of harm, including emotional harm and neglect.

4.9 Publicity:

- We'll promote a clear message through our website, social media and customer newsletters that domestic abuse is not acceptable.
- We'll encourage victims to seek help and urge witnesses to report concerns.

4.10 Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA):

- We'll work towards our accreditation following the 6 DAHA principles and the 8 priority areas during 2021 and 2022.
- We'll embrace new ways of working and be open to culture change.

5. Responsibilities

We'll review this policy annually to ensure that we are following best practice.

6. Related documents

Legislation:

Family Law Act 1996

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act

Housing Act 1996

Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004

Crime and Security Act 2010

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Care Act 2014

Serious Crime Act 2015

Clare's Law 2017 - also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

Homelessness Reduction Act

General Data Protection Regulation (2018)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Policy links:

Safeguarding Children Policy

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Housing Management Policy

Anti-social Behaviour Policy

Income Management Policy

Lettings Policy

Speak up Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

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