

# Domestic Abuse and Housing *Policy*

2023-2026



## Enfield Domestic Abuse Housing Policy

2023-2026

<b>Document Author</b>	Corporate Strategy Service Housing and Regeneration
<b>Document owner – Corporate</b>	Joanne Drew – Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration
<b>Document owner – Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing
<b>Governance Board</b>	Portfolio Decision

# Contents

Foreword	<b>4</b>
1. Introduction	<b>5</b>
2. Definition of domestic abuse	<b>6</b>
3. Who this policy applies to	<b>8</b>
4. Principles	<b>9</b>
5. Equality diversity and inclusion	<b>11</b>
6. Responding to reports of domestic abuse	<b>12</b>
7. Perpetrators of domestic abuse	<b>13</b>
8. Housing options	<b>14</b>
9. Staff duties and responsibilities	<b>15</b>
10. Safety-led case management	<b>15</b>
11. Safeguarding	<b>16</b>
12. Awareness and communication of our policy	<b>17</b>
13. User feedback	<b>18</b>
14. Review	<b>18</b>
15. Relevant legislation and strategies	<b>19</b>
16. Glossary	<b>20</b>

# Foreword

We do not tolerate domestic abuse and take seriously our duty to support victims and survivors. This policy sets out how we will support victims/ survivors and their children to access safe affordable accommodation away from the abuse, aiming to end the abuse and prevent homelessness.

Domestic abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions as the abuser seeks to hold power over their victim. Whilst this may be a one-off incident, in many cases the abuse continues over a period of time.

Everyone's situation is different, and a one- size-fits-all approach does not work. This draft policy sets out how staff across all our housing services tailor the support we provide based on the needs of victims and survivors. It shows how staff across all relevant teams work together to enable victims/ survivors to make their existing home safe or support them to move away to another home if this is not possible.



**Cllr George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

# 1. Introduction

**This policy explains the rights of all Enfield residents to access safe accommodation away from abuse. It sets out how we expect Enfield Council staff, contractors, sub-contractors and their agents to respond to a disclosure of domestic abuse. It describes our commitment to promote early help and our approach to providing co-ordinated tailored support for victims/survivors and/or their children. The policy applies to Enfield Council Housing tenants and Enfield residents who access support from our Housing Advisory Service, regardless of their tenure, and is for adults and children affected by domestic abuse.**

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and our officers will always treat victims/survivors with respect and dignity and empower them to make informed decisions. We use a safety-led approach and will always work with the victim/survivor to make sure any actions taken improve their personal safety and housing security.

We believe perpetrators (those committing the abuse) are responsible for their own behaviour and that they should be held to account for the consequences of their actions. We do not tolerate domestic abuse and will work with victims/survivors and relevant organisations to identify appropriate measures to stop perpetrators and work to prevent them committing abuse again in the future. Measures may include eviction or working with the police to issue orders such as an injunction, anti-molestation order or Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) which prohibits the perpetrator from contacting the victim.

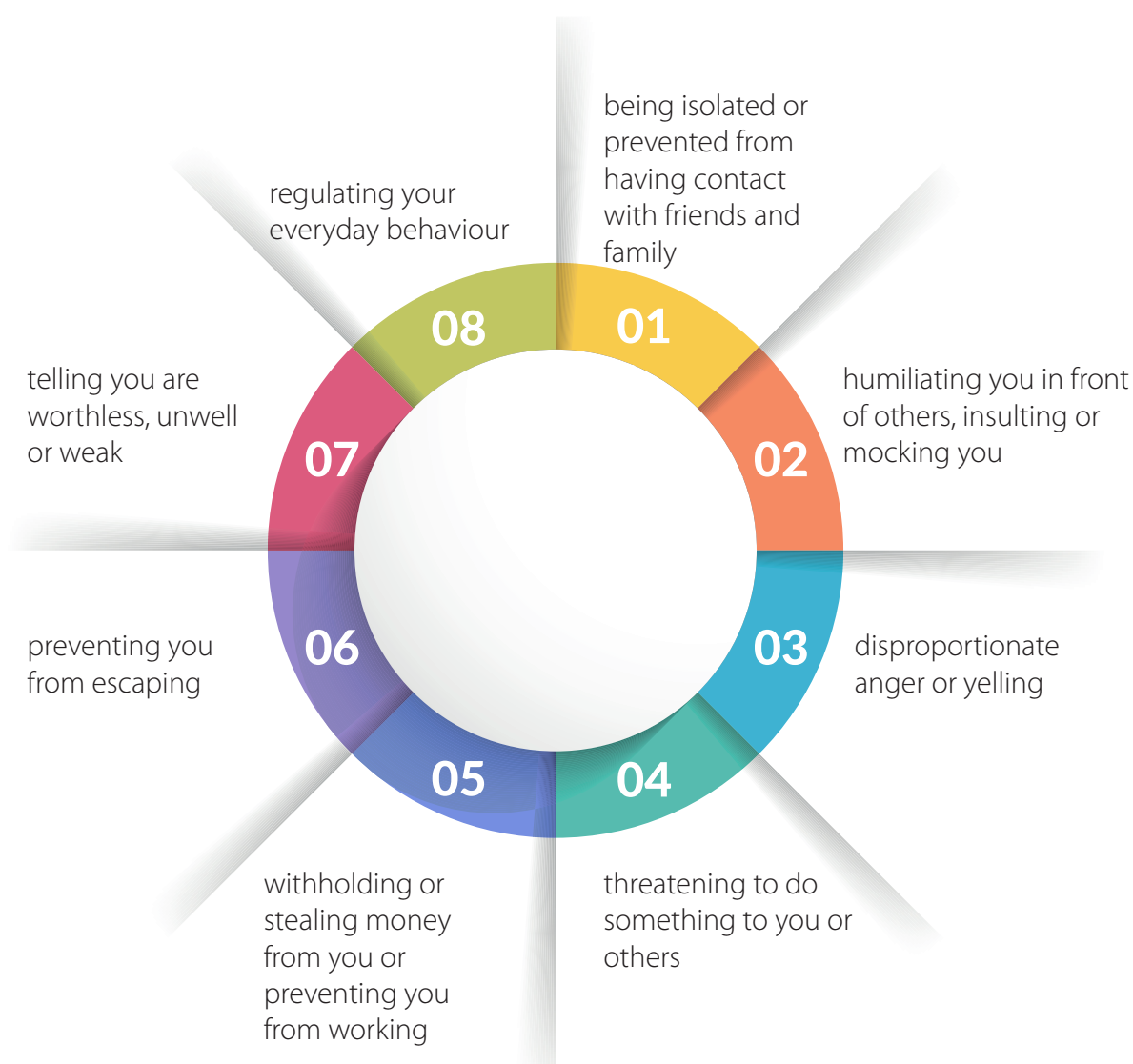


## 2. Definition of domestic abuse

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) defines domestic abuse as an event or pattern of events of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people aged 16 or over who are (or have been) intimate partners or family members/ relatives (see section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996 for description) regardless of gender or sexuality.

Physical violence is just one type of abuse – domestic abuse can be any behaviour which is used to harm, punish or frighten, or makes the individual feel bullied, controlled or intimidated. This includes mental, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

### Some examples of abusive behaviour might be:



Domestic abuse can occur at any time during a relationship, it is rarely a one-off incident, and it often forms a pattern of behaviour where the abuser seeks to hold power over their victim.

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

We use terminology used in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). This means that although the term domestic violence is still used in certain documentation and services, we have chosen to use the term domestic abuse to cover all the different types of abuse. We also refer to victims/survivors and their children to recognise:

- a) adults or children (aged under 18) who are domestic abuse victims/survivors due to experiencing the effects of the abuse
- b) our extended support to children who are not recognised as victims/survivors under the Act, but are under 18, living with (part time or temporarily) and/or have some dependency on (but are not the biological/legal child or relative of) the domestic abuse victim/survivor.

### 3. Who this policy applies to

**This policy applies to all Enfield Council staff, contractors, sub-contractors and agents working for Enfield Council Housing Service. It relates to our role as a social landlord providing council housing; and in relation to delivering on our homelessness duties as a local authority.**

It includes:

- Our approach to raising awareness of domestic abuse and promoting early help from housing services
- How we expect staff, contractors, sub-contractors and their agents to respond to disclosure of domestic abuse
- Details of the options available to Enfield Council Housing tenants seeking assistance from the Council
- How we support all residents experiencing domestic abuse at risk of homelessness.





# 4. Principles

All Council staff are expected to demonstrate the following behaviours, helping us to provide all our services across the Council in a way that is respectful, responsive and co-ordinated.

Our corporate behaviours are:

We take responsibility	
We are open, honest and respectful	
We listen and learn	
We work together to find solutions	

In our work to prevent domestic abuse and support victims and survivors across all housing services we will:

**Prioritise Safety:** Victims/survivors have the right to be safe in their homes and communities. We will prioritise safety and recognise that safe intervention starts by talking to individuals and providing appropriate services and support in a way that avoids triggering further trauma. These may include referrals to partner agencies for support, the installation of additional safety measures in their existing property such as locks or a tamper proof letter box, or supporting a move to another home.

**Be non-judgemental:** Victims/survivors disclosing abuse will be believed, listened to and accepted. We will create safe environments to enable open, honest and respectful discussions and all disclosures will be taken seriously and treated in confidence.





**Be person-centred:** Victim/survivors are at the heart of any intervention and support. We will focus support and care based on the individual's needs.

**Amplify victim/survivor voices:** Victims/survivors' feedback and suggestions about the services we provide are valued, responded to appropriately and lessons are learnt. We will collect their views in several different ways, including through informal conversations as well as through questionnaires or working groups where appropriate.

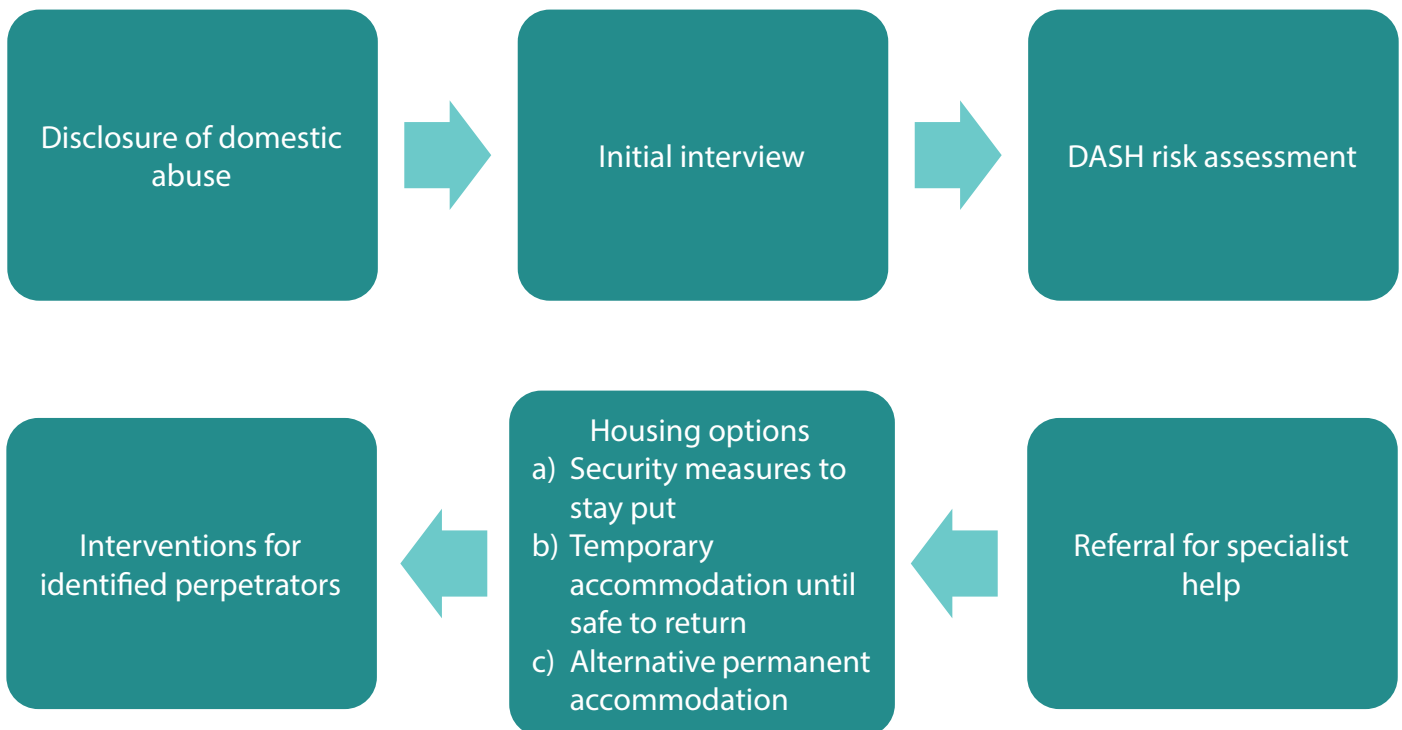
**Understand intersectionality:** Victims/survivors all have different experiences and face barriers related to their identity and protected characteristics such as age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marital status and socio-economic status. We will respect and seek to fully understand individual differences, experiences and needs, enabling tailored services and the right support.

**Work towards a Coordinated Community Response (CCR):** Victims/survivors will receive support from local providers who will work together to offer the right support to meet their specific needs. We will build relationships with tenants and colleagues across Council teams and within other statutory and voluntary and community partners, to make sure we access and refer to the correct services to keep individual and families safe and well.

## Our services and resources are delivered using the following approach<sup>1</sup>:

- Predict** – we predict current and future needs through using local and national crime data, population data and equality impact assessments. These are regularly reviewed, informed through service user and staff feedback and enable us to make commissioning decisions based upon predicted demand. 
- Target** – we direct our limited resources toward those with the greatest needs. Through using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH) and other relevant assessment tools, we identify individuals needs and the best way to meet them. 
- Prevent** – we provide accessible, co-ordinated and early help to stop situations escalating. This means raising awareness and learning from our experiences through audits, case reviews and user feedback. We have a robust complaints system to alert us to any issues that need additional attention. 
- Deliver** – we provide high quality services through meeting regulations, allocating our resources appropriately, listening to our service users and staff and gaining accreditation. 

### Our process



<sup>1</sup> Better Council Homes Programme – delivery principles

# 5. Equality diversity and inclusion

**Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to the decisions we make on how to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents. We will make sure that everyone receives fair, sensitive, and equal treatment and is treated with dignity and respect when accessing our housing services. This includes making sure that residents are aware of their rights and supported to make informed decisions.**

Although we know that anyone can be a victim/survivor, we use national and local data in addition to resident's feedback to make sure we offer the right types of accessible support.

- The Office of National Statistic (ONS)<sup>2</sup> and Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)<sup>3</sup> provides some insights into the gender, age and ethnicity of victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This data helps us target our support, commission services, and make appropriate referrals to meet differing needs. Analysis of the most recent available national data at the time of publication of this policy shows us that the vast majority of victims of domestic abuse crime and domestic homicide are female. Available national data also shows us that victims/ survivors are twice as likely to be disabled women than non-disabled women.<sup>4</sup>



2 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2021>

3 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/crime-and-reoffending/domestic-abuse/latest>

4 [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Disabled\\_Survivors\\_Too\\_Report.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Disabled_Survivors_Too_Report.pdf)

# 6. Responding to reports of domestic abuse

We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and are clear domestic abuse is never the fault of the victim/survivor or their children. We also recognise that every situation is unique, as are the individuals involved, and we will work together to decide the most appropriate course of action.

There are many ways individuals can seek help and a person may disclose abuse at any point of contact with the Council. Every team within the Housing Service has either a domestic abuse White Ribbon champion or an ambassador who works to raise awareness of domestic abuse and offer guidance and support to staff so that everyone is able to provide the right support, advice and interventions to victims and survivors. The council also has a dedicated Domestic Violence Co-ordinator.

If an individual discloses domestic abuse to any member of staff, or a member of staff recognises signs of abuse, we will work together with the victim/survivor to discuss the situation within 24 hours of the initial discussion.

The initial interview will be held with someone who has specialist training, using a trauma informed approach. If needed, we will provide an independent interpreter and/or translation service or make reasonable adjustments to enable the conversation and collection of information.

We will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH). This assessment will help us prepare safety plans and advise individuals of the options available to them.

After completing the assessment and making a plan based on this, with the victim/survivor's consent we will make referrals for specialist support such as to Refuge, Solace Women's Aid, Victim support, Enfield's Women's Centre, Enfield Saheli, Kurdish, Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) or any other relevant reputable organisation (including Men's Advice Line). We will make referrals to the Council's Welfare and Debt Advice team and/or to financial inclusion partners for any required support relating to financial issues. We may signpost the victim/survivor to legal advice (and [legal aid](#) where appropriate) if this is something the victim/survivor wishes to pursue. Legal advice may be about a non-molestation order, demotion of tenancy, a court order or possession proceedings. We will be supportive of anyone wanting to take legal action and provide information as to what to [expect](#) but we will not pressure victim/survivors to do so.

If we believe there is a safeguarding concern of an adult at risk or a child at risk living in the property where the abuse is taking place, we will make a referral to Adult Social Care or Children's Services in accordance with the Council's safeguarding procedures. We will make a referral within the same day of the assessment to relevant support agencies and will clearly explain next steps to the victim/survivor. Further information is set out in section 11 on safeguarding, below.

Where victims/survivors want to stay in their home, as a landlord we will work with our partners to repair damage to the property and improve security<sup>5</sup>. Work will be based upon an individual security assessment, but it may involve window and door lock replacements or installations, window alarms and door chains, and/or installation of a fire-proof letter box. We will endeavour to carry out such repairs within 24 hours of the assessment taking place.

We will keep consistent, accurate and relevant records. We will share these with partners, with permission from the victim/ survivor, so that they do not have to repeat the same information to multiple agencies. Where appropriate, we will ensure that a member of staff of the same gender is assigned to the case and we will keep in contact with the victim/service using the preferred method as agreed with them.

<sup>5</sup> Research from Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance found that 13% of household repairs are linked to domestic abuse

# 7. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

**Our main concern and duty are to the safety of the victim/survivor and that of their child/children. For this reason, any action taken against the perpetrator (sometimes called the 'primary aggressor') will be firstly discussed and agreed with the victim/survivor to minimise any harm or consequence to their personal safety or housing security.**

If the perpetrator has been identified, either through disclosure by the victim/survivor, or through their behaviour, agency information-sharing, police call-outs or anti-social behaviour, their details will be recorded on our relevant case management systems. For council housing tenants, this will be recorded on our council housing case management system.

High risk domestic abuse cases are subject to safeguarding forums such as Enfield's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)<sup>6</sup>. In these cases, the police service put a 'marker' on the victim's home which means any 999 calls from the property will be treated as urgent.

We recognise that housing professionals are in an ideal position to engage with perpetrators who are currently our tenants. If appropriate, we will try to use this position, to encourage perpetrators to access relevant support services, with the aim of reducing the risk of harm that they pose to the victim/survivor and enabling them to take responsibility for their actions. This may include behaviour intervention, mental health or substance misuse services, for example.

If agreed, we may take action in our capacity as the landlord, to stop the abuse and hold perpetrators to account through the courts. This may mean we ask the police to prosecute for criminal damage and/or take action to evict the perpetrator of domestic abuse using the powers available under the Housing Act, considering the wishes of the survivor and their future housing needs.

<sup>6</sup> A MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

# 8. Housing options

The majority of domestic abuse happens in the home and we will support victim/survivors and their children to stay at their current address where this is possible, by working together to remove the perpetrator from the home and identify and agree home safety adaptations. However, if the perpetrator cannot be removed or the risk of continued abuse is high, safe accommodation elsewhere may be needed for victims/ survivors and their children, to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

If the victim/survivor becomes homeless because of domestic abuse they cannot be treated as [intentionally homeless](#). It is recognised they are homeless through no fault of their own and will automatically be identified as having a priority need for safe housing as set out in Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by Pt. 7, s.78 Domestic Abuse Act 2021).

The resulting accommodation may be temporary, until it is safe for them to return to their previous address. In other cases, if there is no chance of a safe return, we will support a move to alternative accommodation without an intention of them returning to their previous address. Based on the individual's needs, this accommodation may need to be outside of the borough.

We will support victims/survivors and their children throughout the process of rehousing. Where they are existing council housing tenants, this will be done by our Council Housing Management Team. In other cases, this will be done by our Housing Advisory Service.



## Council Housing Management

Our Council Housing Management team looks after all tenancy matters relating to Enfield Council homes. The team works with the Council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) and our partners to deliver a co-ordinated response to domestic abuse for our existing Council Housing tenants. Neighbourhood officers are often the first point of contact for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and will refer individuals to other relevant teams for specialist support, while leading on all matters relating to the victim/survivor's housing. Neighbourhood Officers continue to have oversight of all actions taken in order to support them until their housing situation is resolved. The council housing management team will keep up to date records regarding the case on the council housing management systems.

Housing Gateway Limited is a council-owned company which provides housing to tenants on assured shorthold tenancies who may struggle to access private housing. For these tenants the relevant team will carry out the housing management actions to support victims/survivors and their children.



## Housing Advisory Service

Our Housing Advice Service supports Enfield residents at risk of homelessness to solve problems affecting their housing situation, aiming to prevent homelessness. This includes supporting people with what to do if they have been asked by their landlords to leave their property, or if they have had to flee their property due to abuse. For people living in the private rented sector or in a housing association property, this may be the first time Enfield Council comes into contact with a victim/ survivor of domestic abuse. This service has a dedicated Resilience Team that work with tenants to support access to safe accommodation and ensure they are given the right tenancy agreement (Part 7, Section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021).

The Housing Advisory Service will also work with other Registered Housing providers to ensure they support their residents to avoid homelessness as outlined in Objective 4 of the [Enfield Council Tenancy Strategy 2022 to 2025](#).

## 9. Staff duties and responsibilities

A disclosure of domestic abuse can come through any point of contact with Enfield Council. All housing staff including call centre operatives, caretakes, repairs operatives and housing management staff, receive basic awareness training on the signs of domestic abuse and how to deal with a report, as part of their induction process. These staff also receive refresher training and ongoing support and guidance, so they are aware of their abilities and are clear as to their professional and advisory boundaries and onward referral protocol.

## 10. Safety-led case management

Relevant housing officers have a responsibility to oversee, and act as case manager, for disclosed domestic abuse cases for our Council Housing, Housing Gateway and temporary accommodation tenants, until the case is resolved and closed. This ensures that referrals are managed, services and support is co-ordinated and housing needs are met. Our primary concern is that of safety and case details may be shared with other agencies if it is appropriate and necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of our tenants. This process will be discussed with victims/survivors before information is shared.

# 11. Safeguarding

**A high percentage of domestic abuse cases have safeguarding requirements and it is our duty to ensure these are recognised and the correct referrals are quickly made.**

Where there are safeguarding concerns about an adult with care and support needs (as either the survivor of abuse or the perpetrator) or child/children who are living in the property or impacted by the domestic abuse in any way, we will follow existing Council policies and procedures to meet statutory safeguarding requirements.

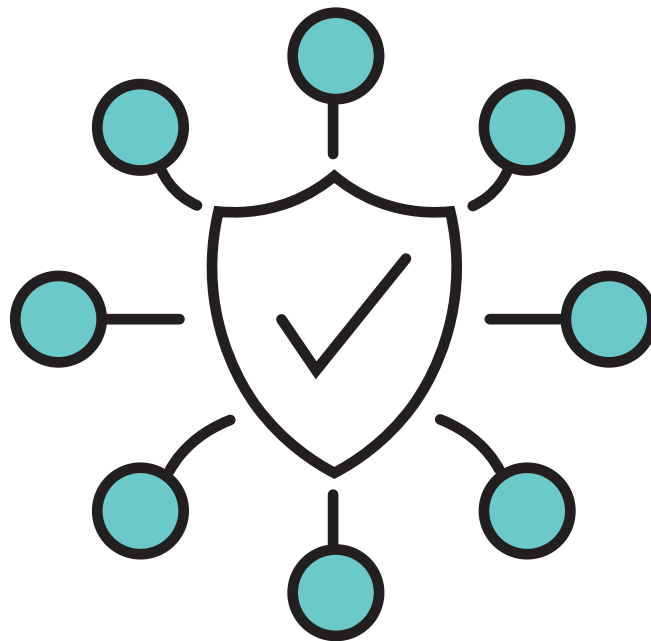
We will ensure that all staff are adequately trained in those policies and procedures on a regular basis. Where staff are not sure if such processes apply then we will ensure that they know who they can contact to discuss individual circumstances and get advice.

We will refer cases to Enfield's Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) when the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH) risk assessment threshold is met. Where the threshold is not met, we will arrange a multi-agency meeting to arrange support from different agencies, in agreement with the individual.

When a child is involved, we will make the relevant referrals to our Children and Family department via the Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Early Help Hub.

We will sign post adults with care and support needs (or whom we have cause to believe have care and support needs) to Adult Social Care via referral to the Adults' Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for consideration of Section 42 of Care Act (2014).

Where perpetrators are employed or volunteer with children or adults with care and support needs, we will ensure that staff refer to the local Persons In a Position of Trust (PIPOT) or Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) processes to address risk to others. We will also ensure that there is appropriate training in how to make such referrals.





## 12. Awareness and communication of our policy

We will use our website to raise awareness about domestic abuse and make clear that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and that our officers will always treat victims/survivors with respect and dignity and empower them to make informed decisions. This policy will be available on our website.

A copy of this policy will be available on council website, along with clear contact details of who to contact to access help and support, including how to contact council housing teams for tenants of council housing; how to contact the Housing Advisory Service for anyone at risk of homelessness, and links to other relevant support services.

We will make sure residents are aware of the policy through providing relevant links (or paper versions) in tenants' documents such as the Tenancy Agreement<sup>7</sup>, in Council correspondence and on campaign-based posters that will be placed on estate notice boards. This will be accompanied by details of bespoke support should residents feel more comfortable initially accessing targeted independent support.

We will make the policy accessible, by creating an easy read version of the policy and providing an interpretation or translation of the policy where required for residents who do not speak English.

We will also raise awareness of the support available for victims/survivors and their children and will challenge harmful behaviours that perpetuate domestic abuse through participating in national and local campaigns and educational interventions, such as White Ribbon Day.

We will ensure that campaigns, including those delivered by any third party, meet the quality standards needed for the RESPECT accreditation<sup>8</sup>.

7 <https://www.enfield.gov.uk/services/housing/council-housing/your-tenancy>

8 Respect accreditation is a quality assurance certification offered for two types of services: those working with perpetrators and those working with male victims. Services working with perpetrators are assessed against the [Respect Standard](https://www.respect.uk.net/pages/accreditation), and services for male victims are assessed against the [Respect Male Victims' Standard](https://www.respect.uk.net/pages/accreditation). <https://www.respect.uk.net/pages/accreditation>

## 13. User feedback

Our support will be appropriate, of high quality and co-ordinated to make sure we collectively meet the needs of our residents. To do this we need to make use of data collected within the Enfield Council Housing Service, across the council and through feedback given by service users with lived experiences and apply learning gained during reviews.

We value and seek service user feedback to gain insight as to the ease of access, quality of service and individual outcomes through using our Council funded housing and domestic support contracted services. This will be gained in the following ways:

- Our annual Council Housing Tenant Satisfaction survey
- Satisfaction surveys used when domestic abuse cases are closed
- Involving tenants and leaseholders in decision-making through engagement with our council housing resident's forum, Customer Voice
- Hearing the views of tenants/leaseholders/service users at topic-specific focus groups.

## 14. Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and is due for full renewal in 2026 (3 years following approval of this version of the policy). Annual reviews will consider changes to legislation and feedback from staff and service users.



# 15. Relevant legislation, policies and strategies

## Legislation

- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Children Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018
- [Social Housing White Paper](#) - November 2020 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which sets out what social housing tenants can expect from their landlord, including a dedicated section on supporting tenants facing domestic abuse.
- [Mayor of London - Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy](#)

## Enfield specific policies and strategies

- [Enfield Council Plan 2023-2026](#)
- [Tackling Child Neglect Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)
- [Enfield Council Tenancy Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)
- [Enfield Housing Allocations Scheme](#)
- [Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025](#)
- [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#)
- [Fairer Enfield Policy 2021 to 2025](#)
- [Enfield Early Help for All Strategy 2021 to 2025](#)
- [Enfield Modern Slavery Strategy 2020-2023](#)
- [Enfield Community Safety Plan 2022-25](#)

# 16. Glossary

## **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

This is a group of highly skilled professionals representing the local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. It is co-ordinated by the Police.

An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) presents the case on behalf of the victim and the representatives work together to increasing the safety of the victim and create a co-ordinated action plan. Each MARAC decides its own risk threshold requirement and our MARAC is scheduled to meet every 3 weeks at Edmonton Green Police Station.

## **White Ribbon champion**

[White Ribbon](https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk) is a UK charity that seeks to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. Enfield was the first London council to receive the title of 'White Ribbon Authority' in 2010. We renew our status on an annual basis and are known as a 'White Ribbon Borough'. As part of our commitment, we have staff that take on the role of White Ribbon Champion and Ambassador. These roles allow them to educate, raise awareness and "call out abusive and sexist behaviour among their friends, colleagues and communities to promote a culture of equality and respect."<sup>9</sup>

## **DASH risk assessment**

The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Assessment has been used by the UK's Police Force since March 2009. This has been further developed and is now used by all professionals working with victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The risk assessment makes sure everyone asks the right questions and can accurately assess levels of risk. If the risk threshold is met, cases are then referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

9 <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/what-we-do>