

Domestic Abuse Policy

Our approach to customers experiencing domestic abuse

1. Policy Statement

This policy is intended to be comprehensive, clear and accessible. It outlines our general approach to addressing domestic abuse. However, we will consider each situation on its particular facts against the framework and guidance provided by our policy and procedure.

We take domestic abuse seriously and are committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Antisocial Behaviour
- Harassment
- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children
- Data Protection
- Joint to Sole Tenancy Policy
- Staff Handbook

2. Background

The Home Office definition of domestic abuse, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 includes ‘single incident or course of conduct between those over age 16 and are personally connected to each other of physical or sexual abuse, threatening or violent behaviour, coercive or controlling behaviour and economic, psychological, emotional and other abuse.’

It includes forced marriage and so-called ‘honour violence’. Children are also affected by domestic abuse, and this raises domestic abuse as a child protection issue. As of 2021, children now can be recognised as victims of domestic abuse rather than just witnesses.

3. Scope

The policy applies to all properties owned and/or managed by Yorkshire Housing (including SPACE properties).

The policy will apply to Yorkshire Housing tenants and their household members.

Yorkshire Housing has guidance relating to abuse suffered by or perpetrated by members of staff.

4. Partnership Working

We acknowledge that dealing with issues of domestic abuse requires a multi-agency approach and will endeavour to work with local agencies to ensure cases are dealt with in the most effective and efficient way. This may include referrals to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC).

5. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

Yorkshire Housing are members of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance and we are working towards the DAHA accreditation. DAHA seek to set the standard for UK housing providers for response to domestic abuse. Seeking to be accredited by 2023, with 8 main priority areas, most notably we will be:

- Putting in place and embedding a customer *and* colleague policy, with specific approaches to support both and staff development and support.
- Embedding safety led case management and updated dedicated training.
- Raising internal and external awareness of domestic abuse and how it impacts families.
- Holding perpetrators accountable for their actions to minimise the impact of harm on survivor safety and housing their security.
- Always providing victim/survivor led support that is truly inclusive through instilling intersectional and anti-racist practice.

6. Key Points

6.1. Reporting Abuse

Domestic abuse can be reported by victims or witnesses, including Yorkshire Housing staff, by any reasonable means and may be made in the first instance to the police, local authorities, refuge groups, voluntary organisations or friends and relatives.

6.2. Recognising Abuse

All frontline staff receive domestic abuse awareness training so they are better able to recognise signs of abuse and will initiate the appropriate actions.

We will take a believing approach and support the victim's decisions however they prefer to seek (or not seek) help. We also will act as discreetly as possible, keeping all information confidential. We will explain clearly what the options are and what support measures are available without placing the victim at risk of retaliation.

6.3. Support for victims and witnesses

We will consider the safety of victims and witnesses, and where appropriate we will work with partners to provide additional safety measures. We will use the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment protocol to ensure a consistent approach when offering support and when deciding if a referral to MARAC is required. All response from Yorkshire Housing will be centred around our customer's needs, operating with a survivor led approach.

6.4. Support for victims through legal action

When appropriate, we will support victims to take their own legal action against the perpetrator and consider using our own legal remedies to protect the victim and support the victim's efforts to remain at home.

The Housing Act 1996 allows housing associations to evict a perpetrator of domestic abuse, whether or not they are a joint or sole tenant of the property.

For victims at immediate risk, we will consider a range of options for emergency housing including referral to the local authority homeless persons unit or refuge.

6.5. Data Protection and Confidentiality

We recognise that cases of domestic abuse can be very sensitive. Information provided by the complainant will be handled as confidential at all times and only passed to external agencies with prior consent complying with the best practice guidance set out in Yorkshire Housing's data protection policy and procedures.

We reserve the right to make a referral to social services or to the police without the permission of the complainant or the alleged perpetrator, where the situation justifies it in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

6.6. Safeguarding

All employees will consider whether there are any safeguarding implications for each case and consider whether any children or vulnerable adults are at risk of harm or self-neglect. If so, Section 1 of the Safeguarding System will be completed within 24 hours of receiving the information and the case allocated to a Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) who will ensure the necessary actions are taken.

6.7. Monitoring Our Service

We will collect data on domestic abuse cases to show the scale and extent of these issues as they affect our customers; we will monitor whether we respond to these reports within the required timescales and within procedures; and we will seek to monitor levels of awareness about the signs of domestic abuse amongst our staff.

7. Responsibility for Implementation

The Head of Customer Independence and Head of Place are responsible for implementing this policy.

8. Equality and Diversity

This policy will be used in conjunction with Yorkshire Housing's Equality & Fairness Strategy. Yorkshire Housing treats all customers under this policy fairly and equitably regardless of age, gender, race, colour, religious belief, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, culture, ability or lifestyle.

Yorkshire Housing recognises that domestic abuse is mostly inflicted by men on women and/or children or other family members. E.g., In 2021, 73% of victims of domestic abuse related crimes were female ¹ and 91.9% of defendants in domestic abuse related cases were male ². However, we also recognise that such abuse can and does also occur in heterosexual relationships where the man is the victim. In addition, it is also recognised that abuse can take place in LGBTQIA+ relationships and non-romantic relationships'

9. Reporting and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current legislation and good practice and will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding team.

¹ ONS (2021) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2021. Available at: [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/conditions/domesticabuse/victimcharacteristicsenglandandwales)

² ONS (2021) Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system: year ending March 2021. Available at: [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/conditions/domesticabuse/domesticabuseandthecriminaljusticesystem)

Version Control Amendments 2019

Complete rewrite and replacement of prior Domestic Violence Policy

Version Control Amendments 2022

Pg. 1 Changed 'Neighbourhood Services Team' to 'Tenancy Management', 'Space' to 'Space Homes', 'Customer Insight Panel' to 'Customer Voice and Review Committee'

Pg. 1 Removed 'North Yorkshire ASB Partnership' and 'Places for People'

Pg.2 Added 'Domestic Abuse Act 2021', 'Human Rights Act 1998', 'Equality Act 2010', 'Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)' to Legal Requirement

Pg. 2 Added 'Yammer' and 'Yorkshire Housing Website' to Circulation

Pg. 2 Removed 2018 from the Harassment Policy

Pg. 2 Added Safeguarding Adults Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy and Joint to Sole Tenancy Policy

Pg. 3 Altered definition of Domestic Abuse in line with 2021 Domestic Abuse Act

Pg. 4 Added 'As of 2021, children now can be recognised as victims of domestic abuse rather than just witnesses.'

Pg.4 Removed Make a Stand Pledge and replaced with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance commitments

Pg. 5 Added 'We will take a believing approach and support their decisions however they choose to seek (or not seek) help.'

Pg. 5 Added 'All response from Yorkshire Housing will be centred around our customer's needs, operating with a survivor led approach.

Pg. 7 Changed 'Head of Neighbourhood Services' to 'Head of Customer Independence and Head of Place'

Pg. 7 Changed 'usually' to 'mostly'

Pg. 7 Added 'and does'

Pg. 7 Added 'E.g., In 2021, 73% of victims of domestic abuse related crimes were female and 91.9% of defendants in domestic abuse related cases were male'

Pg. 7 Changed 'lesbian and gay' to 'LGBTQIA+'

Pg. 7 Added 'non-romantic relationships'

Date approved	June 2022
Approved by	Head of Service
Recommended / scrutinised by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Management • Independent Living Service • External Solicitors • Customer Voice and Review Committee • Space Homes • Governance
Summary of changes	Updated legislation, service names and outdated language
Frequency of review	3 years
Next review date	June 2025
Lead officer	Lucy Prenton
Associated policies or guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment Policy • Antisocial Behaviour Policy • Data Protection Policy • Safeguarding Adults Policy • Safeguarding Children Policy • Joint to Sole Tenancy Policy
Associated procedure	