



CHESHIRE
PEAKS & PLAINS
HOUSING TRUST

The Trust

Domestic Abuse Policy

Neighbourhood
Management Team

Draft: Final

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Affected Teams: All



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1 AIM

- 1.1 Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust (the Trust) believes that its residents should not live in fear of abuse from a spouse or partner, former spouse or partner, or other member of their household. We are committed to offering assistance to any of our residents who are suffering from domestic abuse from someone within their home, or from someone outside their home. Enhancing the safety of adult and child survivors of domestic abuse is our ultimate goal.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The key objectives of this Policy are:

- To assist, wherever possible, those threatened with or suffering abuse by providing secure accommodation, free from the abuse.
- To provide advice to the victims of abuse on alternate sources of accommodation and support, including assistance from voluntary organisations, in cases where we are not in a position to provide secure accommodation or where such onward referral is the client's choice.
- To take a victim-centred approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse. Recognising that evidence of domestic abuse may not always be readily available; we will accept the victim's account and will not insist on the victim providing proof of evidence. Although some form of evidence will be required where legal action is to be taken and verification may be required where other potential solutions are being considered such as a management transfer.
- To take action to evict the perpetrators of domestic abuse using the powers available to us under the Housing Act 1996, and other relevant legislation, subject to the wishes of the victim.
- To take a flexible approach in responding to incidents of domestic abuse and take account of the varying circumstances of victims of abuse and the different courses of action, which may be possible and appropriate.
- To be consistent with other policies of the Trust, for example policies on racial harassment, anti-social behaviour, lettings, and equality and diversity.
- To comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory guidance, and Codes of Practice, and to learn from examples of good practice.
- To keep up to date records of local agencies, which might be in a position to offer advice or support to victims of and domestic violence
- Participate in any local forums established to consider the needs of those suffering from domestic violence, including Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
- Raise awareness via a commitment to public displays of posters and leaflets

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The Trust has adopted the definition of domestic abuse from CDAP (Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership, 1998)

"Domestic Violence is the emotional, physical or psychological abuse of a person by their partners, family members or someone with whom there has been a relationship. This includes any repeated incidence of personal, physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or economic abuse, threatening behaviour, intimidation, physical attack, murder, manslaughter and damage to property. It involves any treatment of one person by another that contributes to an erosion of self or degradation. This essentially involves the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one person."

- 3.2 Examples of domestic abuse include:

- Physical abuse – e.g. slapping, pushing, kicking, punching and stabbing, attempted murder or murder
- Sexual abuse – e.g. rape and non-consensual sex acts
- Emotional or psychological abuse – e.g. intimidation, isolation,
- Verbal abuse, humiliation, degradation, etc
- Financial abuse – e.g. denial of rights or restriction of personal freedom, e.g. withholding money or financial help

4. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The key legislation relevant to the Domestic Abuse Policy is the Housing Act 1996.

5. KEY POINTS OF POLICY

- 5.1 The appropriate Executive Director is responsible for the overall implementation of the Policy. A senior manager will be the coordinator of this policy but it will involve liaison between other the Trust's Teams such as Lettings, Estate Management and the Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

- 5.2 The Trust will deal sensitively with victims of domestic abuse by: -

- Thoroughly investigating all reports of domestic abuse promptly
- Informing all parties involved in a case of responsible named staff
- Fully involving the complainant in the action planning to try and

resolve the issue

- Keeping the complainant informed about progress
- Keeping detailed records of the incidents and investigations carried out
- Taking care to respect confidentiality
- Referring the complainant to other agencies who need to take action or who could offer support if requested by the victim.
- Giving clear feedback to the victim at the close of a case

5.3 A range of responses and enforcement action may be taken to deal with domestic abuse. Depending on the circumstances and the victim's wishes the following may be used: -

- Possession proceedings under the Housing Act 1996
- Reference to the police for criminal prosecution
- Injunctions and Exclusion Orders
- Issue warnings to enforce tenancy conditions

5.4 The Trust will offer support to victims of domestic abuse. Support requirements will be tailored to an individual's needs and may include:

- Management transfers
- Provision of additional security measures (e.g. panic alarms, new locks, etc)
- Provision of alternative secure temporary or permanent Accommodation via the homeless section or with a women's refuge
- Access to outreach and counselling services
- Regular telephone calls and visits by the Trust's Officers
- Use of language line
- Additional support may also be provided in liaison with external Agencies.

5.5 The Trust will maintain strict confidentiality in dealing with cases of domestic abuse. Separate secure records (from the standard house files) will be maintained.

As a rule we will seek permission from those reporting domestic abuse before disclosing information to any other party other than the victim. However cases involving child protection concerns must be referred to Social Services and staff will inform clients of this duty.

5.6 The nature of domestic abuse means that some cases will be difficult to resolve or bring to an end. However, we will ensure that complainants are clearly advised when no further action can be taken to resolve an issue and a case being closed. We will seek feedback from the complainant on how well the case has been handled.

6 STAFF TRAINING

- 6.1 The success of the Domestic Abuse Policy and proper implementation of the accompanying procedures depend on the knowledge and confidence of the staff implementing them.
- 6.2 Staff will be well trained and expected to support the Trust's commitment to dealing with domestic abuse. There will be thorough induction training for new staff and regular updates for all staff who have responsibilities for any part of the Policy.
- 6.3 The Trust will support and continue to work with relevant agencies to develop appropriate strategies for responding to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Trust recognises that minority groups are often underrepresented in reporting domestic abuse. The Trust will seek to address this issue in line with the requirements its policy and the relevant legislation.

8. RESPONSIBILITY

- 8.1 The Director of Operations will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.
- 8.2 The Director of Operations will also be responsible for ensuring that all staff involved in the implementation of this policy are aware of and trained in the Trust's policies and procedures.

9. REPORTING AND REVIEW

- 9.1 A performance monitoring report detailing how the Trust works with Macclesfield Borough Council and other partners to reach targets 7,8 and 9 of BVPI 225 will be provided quarterly to the relevant Committee.
- 9.2 The Policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust's staff and Board, in consultation with residents and relevant agencies. The review will ensure that the policy takes into account:
 - Changes in statutory guidance and developing good practice
 - That working partnerships with relevant agencies are contributing to the Trust's aims and objectives

10. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Equality and Diversity Policy
Customer Care Policy
The Trust's Tenants' Handbook
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
Child Protection Policy

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