

# **Rother Owned/Leased Accommodation**

## **Domestic Abuse Policy for RDC Tenants**

## 1. **Aims**

This policy provides a framework on how the housing team will assist and support Rother District Council (RDC) tenants, in all our accommodation types, experiencing domestic abuse.

## 2. **Scope**

This policy relates to all tenants of RDC owned/leased accommodation. Domestic Abuse is defined as:

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other regardless of gender or sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional forms of abuse.”*

## 3. **Objectives**

- To ensure our tenants can live in a safe and secure environment
- To Offer Housing Options advice
- To help sign post our tenants to appropriate support services

## 4. **Identifying Domestic Abuse**

There are a number of ways in which tenants experiencing domestic abuse may come to the attention of the housing team: These may include:

- Reports of antisocial behaviour from another tenant or neighbouring resident. This is the most common way in which domestic abuse is detected
- A concern being raised by someone else to the Housing Management Officer including from neighbours
- By a routine visit by Council staff
- The victim raising their own concerns that they are/have experience domestic abuse
- Through a referral from an external partner i.e. police, social services, IDVA service
- Contractors raising a concern to us
- Through persistent repair recharges
- Through a referral to MARAC

## 5. **Dealing with Reports of Domestic Abuse**

Dealing with domestic abuse requires the Housing Management Officer to be sensitive and take the lead from the victim over what course of action they want to take. In all cases victims would be encouraged to report any incident to the police.

Following a report of domestic abuse (however, the report was received) the Housing Management Officer would meet or call the victim within 24 hours. At this initial meeting:

- Interviews will be carried out in a sensitive and supportive manner

- Immediate housing options and tenancy rights will be discussed
- Contact with the police and medical services will be discussed
- A Risk Assessment will be completed to ensure the safety of the victim
- A referral to MARAC will be made if the threshold is met by using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification checklist, or based on the Officer's professional opinion.
- Advice of support available both locally and nationally will be discussed
- The Housing Management Officer will agree with the victim what action will be taken and an action plan produced and agreed
- Any action required such as sanctuary/target hardening measures including new/extra locks, CCTV etc. would be discussed

Following the initial meeting the Housing Management Officer will:

- Action any sanctuary/target hardening measures including new/extra locks, CCTV etc.
- Make any referrals - Where there are any safeguarding concerns involving the victim or any children of the victim or the perpetrator the Housing Officer would notify either East Sussex County Council's Children Services or Adult Social Care departments using the appropriate referral forms
- Meet the Housing Solutions Manager (who is informed of all cases of domestic abuse by the Housing Management Officer) to review the action plan

The Housing Management Officer will ensure that contact is maintained with the victim until the victim feels that support is no longer necessary, or they have moved into accommodation that is not RDC owned/managed.

The Housing Solutions Manager, once satisfied with the action plan and proposed actions, will review the case weekly after the initial review. This process will continue until the service has done everything that they are able to do to resolve the domestic abuse and consequences of such actions.

If the victim does not want to take any action taken, does not want any other agencies involved or refuses to acknowledge that there is any domestic abuse we would:

- Respect their wishes
- Monitor their situation and complete a risk assessment form
- Notify third parties as applicable including the police and Adult Social Care or Children's Services if there were any safeguarding issues
- Ensure the victim knows of the support services available locally
- Advise the victim of housing options such as refuge
- Ensure the victim knew they could contact us if they changed their mind or the police in emergencies
- Advise the victim of what we can do as their landlord

## 6. Meeting our Objectives

To ensure tenants are:

- Housed in a safe and secure environment
  - The Housing Department run a Sanctuary Scheme which is a victim centred initiative that aims to make it possible for victims of domestic

abuse, other physical violence or hate crimes to remain in their homes and feel safe, if a risk assessment deems it appropriate to do so and/or the victim so wishes. It provides an alternative to relocation away from family and friends, vital support networks and key services. It seeks to prevent homelessness through the installation of enhanced security measures in a victim's property these can range from additional locks for doors and windows, to window grills and in extreme cases, a safe room (sometimes known as target hardening). The scheme is available to women and men, with or without children

- Where a tenant is in temporary accommodation, and it is not safe for the victim to stay where they are, we will complete a move to alternative temporary accommodation
- We can explore options of Refuge. As well as accommodation, the staff at the refuges are trained to provide help with practical issues as well as providing emotional support. Additionally, there are refuges located in the neighbouring Authorities, as well as nationwide, which Rother District Council also has access to if it would be safer for the victim to move out of area or if there are no vacancies locally. Unfortunately, there is no provision within the district or neighbouring areas for men.
- Offered Housing Options advice
- Anyone experiencing domestic abuse can get free housing advice from the Council's Housing Needs Team
- All non-secure tenancies, with RDC, will be in the name of the main homeless applicant (even if there is more than one adult in the household). If the victim of the domestic abuse is not the main applicant, then we will complete a separate individual homeless application, if the victim wants to, and move them to alternate temporary accommodation. If the victim of domestic abuse is the named tenant, then the perpetrator may be asked to leave the property, and if the victim requests, they will be removed from the homeless application. The perpetrator may make a new homeless application, but this will be assessed in its own rights and temporary accommodation may not be provided
- Legal remedies such as injunctions against the perpetrator might be appropriate (In cases of domestic abuse, an injunction would normally involve the perpetrator being not allowed to come into the locality of the victim's home). Therefore, the victim would be referred to Brighton Housing Trust for advice on these legal remedies
- Signposted to appropriate support services
  - The Housing Officer will sign-post the victim to support services that exist both locally and nationally to help victims of domestic abuse. The perpetrator will also be signposted to appropriate support agencies for help particularly if they are themselves vulnerable due to mental health, drugs or alcohol etc.

## 7. Multi-Agency Approach

We acknowledge that dealing with issues of domestic abuse requires a multi-agency approach and will work with local agencies in individual cases to ensure cases are dealt with in the most effective and efficient way. There are a number of local partnerships in place which aim to tackle domestic abuse in a more holistic way, including:

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) - Meets weekly to bring together representatives from a number of agencies in East Sussex to

discuss the safety, health and well-being of people experiencing domestic abuse (and their children). The Safer East Sussex Team are part of the group and offers training to statutory, voluntary and community sector partners to help ensure that frontline professionals are able to undertake risk identification and refer to the MARAC. Housing actively engages with the service and will make referrals as appropriate.

- Change Grow Live (CGL) Domestic Abuse Service is a service that can support people who have been affected by domestic abuse and violence in East Sussex. To access their service victims need to be referred by one of their partners including Sussex Police or housing provider, or they can self-refer.

## 8. **Review**

We will carry out a review of this policy every three years or sooner, subject to any legal, regulatory or internal changes. We will consult and involve our tenants at these reviews through satisfaction surveys and feedback groups.

## 9. **Data Protection**

We recognise that incidents of domestic abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for victims to report and will ensure total confidentiality on any cases that are reported. We may, however, share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, adult social care and children's service to deal with cases more effectively. This may either be by gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator, or by sharing information in the safeguarding interests of the victim and/or their children and the perpetrator. Rother District Council is fully committed to protecting your personal data. You can find a copy of our Privacy Policy at [www.rother.gov.uk/data-protection-and-foi/privacy-policy/](http://www.rother.gov.uk/data-protection-and-foi/privacy-policy/)

## Support Services

Organisation	Description	Contact
Change, Grow, Live (CGL – East Sussex	CGL offer support to anyone aged 16+ who has been affected by domestic abuse and violence.	<a href="#">Domestic Abuse Service – East Sussex   Change Grow Live</a> 0300 323 9985 <a href="mailto:ESDomesticAbuse.Info@cgl.org.uk">ESDomesticAbuse.Info@cgl.org.uk</a>
Refuge	Clarion Housing Association provides safe refuge accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence across East Sussex	<a href="#">Domestic abuse or violence   Personal wellbeing   Clarion (myclarionhousing.com)</a> 0808 2000 247 <a href="mailto:Referrals.eastsussex@clarionhq.com">Referrals.eastsussex@clarionhq.com</a>
Safe Space Sussex	Provides an online directory of local victim and witness specialist support services. It also has information about what happens at each stage of the criminal justice system	<a href="#">Safe:Space Sussex (safespacesussex.org.uk)</a>
Men’s Aid Charity	Help to provide practical advice and support to men who have been abused	<a href="#">Home (mensaid.co.uk)</a> 0333 567 0556
Rape Crisis	Provides specialist information and support to all those affected by rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and all other forms of sexual violence and abuse in England and Wales	<a href="#">Rape Crisis England &amp; Wales</a> 0808 500 2222 <a href="mailto:rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk">rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk</a>
Shelter	Advice and support services offer one-to-one, personalised help with housing issues and homelessness	<a href="#">Home - Shelter England</a> 0808 800 4444 <a href="mailto:info@survivorsnetwork.org.uk">info@survivorsnetwork.org.uk</a>
Survivors Network	The Survivors Network provide the specialist rape and sexual violence abuse service for Sussex	<a href="#">Home – Survivors Network</a> 01273 203 380