

Domestic Abuse Policy

Our Vision

Building better lives through social care and housing in local communities.

Our Mission

We co-design and deliver services that offer innovative social care solutions and support people to thrive.

Our Values

We are **caring** and **compassionate**



We are **inclusive** and **trusted**



We focus on **excellence** and **innovation**



We work in **partnership** and are **one-team**



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 **Look Ahead**
CARE, SUPPORT AND HOUSING

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We believe that everyone has the right to live their lives free from abuse and fear. We understand that domestic abuse can have a devastating, long-term effect on survivors and people close to them. We are members of the [Employer's Domestic Abuse Covenant](#).
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse and takes account of the mental and physical effects of trauma to offer survivors a chance to re-build the connections and trust that were lost due to the abuse and betrayal they have experienced.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all our services, customers and employees, with the exception of our unsupported customers. Domestic abuse that occurs in our unsupported stock will be managed in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. We recognise that domestic abuse can happen to and be perpetrated by anyone regardless of their gender or sexuality over the age of 16.
- 1.4 This policy has been reviewed in the knowledge that the legislation relating to domestic abuse is due to change. The policy will be reviewed annually and updated to reflect the changes when they become law.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Domestic abuse** is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass (but is not limited to) the following [types of abuse](#):
 - Psychological
 - Physical
 - Sexual
 - Financial
 - Emotional
 - Coercion and control
 - Stalking and harassment
- 2.2 **Controlling behaviour** includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support. It centres around exploiting their resources and capabilities for individual personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence.
- 2.3 **Coercive behaviour** is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim. This can include financial control and deprivation of basic needs such as food or access to medical services and medication.
- 2.4 **Forced marriage** is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Victims may face physical pressure to

marry (for example threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure. A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice of whether to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses

- 2.5 [‘Honour’ Based Abuse and Violence](#) - So called “honour” based abuse is a form of domestic abuse where the family or community believe a person has dishonoured or brought shame to their family. The abuse can affect marginalised communities and should be recognised as a high-risk factor. Correct referrals should be made to specialist services such as [Southall Black Sisters](#) or [Karma Nirvana](#). We should consider many different communities as being at risk of HBA/HBV and the risk level is high due to multiple perpetrators. Both men and women can be at risk of HBA/HBV and this can be perpetrated by male and female members of a family.

Never speak through a family member as interpreter or religious leader about any disclosures of abuse and safeguarding of other vulnerable family members such as siblings or cousins should be considered. Interpreters should be ideally from out of area or via TheBigWord, our interpretation service.

- 2.6 [Stalking](#) is a pattern of unwanted and persistent behaviour which is Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and Repetitive. Stalking includes (but is not restricted to) the following behaviours:

- Following a person
- Contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means
- Publishing any statement or other material relating or purporting to relate to a person or purporting to originate from a person
- Monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication
- Loitering in any place (whether public or private)
- Interfering with any property in the possession of a person
- Watching or spying on a person

3. Reporting Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 We take all concerns and reports of domestic abuse very seriously and encourage anyone who witnesses or experiences it to report it. Domestic abuse can be reported by survivors or witnesses which may include other customers, employees, contractors or members of the public.

- 3.2 Reports can be made to anyone, including (but not limited to):

- Our employees
- Contractors
- The police
- Local authorities
- Members of the NHS
- Refuge groups

- Voluntary organisations
- Neighbours
- Members of the public

3.3 All incidents of domestic abuse are logged on our RIVO system, in line with our Safeguarding Policies. This does not include our Independent Domestic Violence Advisory ('IDVA') service. All incidents or suspected incidents of domestic and/or sexual abuse MUST be reported to our internal Domestic Abuse Advice Service (DAAS) at LondonDAASreferrals@lookahead.org.uk Where a crime has been committed, we have a duty to report it to the police. DAAS can provide support and advice on the safest way to do this.

4. Supporting Customers Experience Domestic Abuse

4.1 Our immediate priority when supporting customers is to ensure that they are and that they feel safe. If a customer feels that they are in immediate danger, we will support them to be safe. This may include supporting them to call the police or calling the police on their behalf. If a member of staff discloses the address or information relating to a vulnerable customer our [Disciplinary Policy](#) will be invoked.

DAAS can provide support and advice on helping our customers feel safe from abuse and get the help they need.

4.2 We recognise that every case of domestic abuse is different and may affect people in a different way. We are committed to providing risk led, person centred support to maintain the safety of the victim. Where appropriate, we will work with relevant partners to provide additional security where customers want to remain in their home, although this may not always be possible.

4.3 As soon as they are available to the police, we will support customers to work with the police to issue a Domestic Abuse Protection Notice ('DAPN') and/or a Domestic Abuse Protection Order ('DAPO') when these become available to us in law. In the meantime [guidance is available for staff](#) in preparation for the changes.

4.4 We will advise survivors of domestic abuse to seek independent legal advice about their options and can signpost and support them to the [local options](#) available, including information and support offered by Refuge via their [website](#) (www.nationaladhelpline.org.uk) and helpline 0808 2000 247 which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

4.5 DAAS will work with customers to explore all the options available to them, including advocacy services and safety planning. We cannot provide legal advice and, where appropriate, we will work with the police, or Domestic Abuse Service to use suitable [legal options](#) for survivors.

5. Supporting Staff Experiencing Domestic Abuse

- 5.1 When we receive a report of a member of staff experiencing domestic abuse, we will carry out a risk assessment to consider:
- A possible change of workplace, direct dial number or email
 - Action to secure their safety on their journey to and from work and placement in the building
 - With the consent of the individual, advise other members of staff and, if required, agree actions to take place should the perpetrator turn up at the service
 - Develop and agree an escape plan

6. Support for Children and Young People

- 6.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children are also victims of domestic abuse in their own right and not bystanders or witnesses to the abuse. Where children are involved in domestic abuse, we will follow our Safeguarding Children Policy and procedures and refer families affected by domestic abuse to Children's Social Care for support. We will also include children in any referrals to the local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences ('MARAC').
- 6.2 All staff working with children affected by domestic abuse must complete domestic abuse training and Adverse Childhood Experience training.

Children in Services

- 6.3 When a family arrives in a service staff will ensure that any child or children's safety is risk assessed, as well as the parents.
- 6.4 We will obtain copies of any Protective Orders and support customers to apply for any further orders, if required. This will include a Prohibited Steps Order if we or the customer believes that there is a risk of abduction. When customers plan to be away from the service, they must complete a Customer Leave Form giving details of where their children will be staying while they are away. Staff must be satisfied that the children have left with their parent and that they have not been left alone in the service. This includes making the appropriate checks, in line with our Customer Contact & Welfare Checks Policy and Missing Persons Policy.
- 6.5 We will make customers aware that their children must not be left alone in the service or left with another customer, even for a short time. This should be included in House Rules and warnings will be issued if this is breached.
- 6.6 We work with Early Help and Children's Social Care, as appropriate, to ensure that customers' children receive support appropriate to their age and circumstances. Each child will have their own Support Plan and Risk Assessment which should include safety planning in relation to contact arrangements.

- 6.7 Any contact with the perpetrator or their family must stop until legal advice has been sought. This may include applying for a No Contact Child Arrangement Order whilst the family resides in our service.
- 6.8 If the court decides that contact must continue, safety planning will be completed around any contact arrangements. This will include identifying a trusted third party to drop off and pick the child up and they will be offered advice on potentially being followed back to the service. This will be discussed with the IDVA.
- 6.9 The children of customers accessing our refuge accommodation must not remain in their current school. We will have a confidential discussion with the previous school or nursery immediately to ensure that no information is passed to the perpetrator about the move to a new area. We will also make the new school aware that the children cannot feature in any school photographs.
- 6.10 When children enter a service, we will carry out a Health & Safety Risk Assessment to identify and install any additional safety equipment that may be required, for example stair gates, window locks etc.

Children in the Community

- 6.11 Where we become aware or suspect that a family is experiencing domestic abuse in the community a safeguarding referral will be made, including the safety and location of any children. We can also refer children for therapy if appropriate or requested by the parent.

7. Our Approach to Domestic Abuse

- 7.1 We work in partnership to increase awareness of domestic abuse within the areas we operate. This may include (but is not limited to):
- Local housing and education authorities
 - Police
 - Social Services
 - Support providers
 - Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships ('CDRPs') or Community Safety Partnerships ('CSPs')
 - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences ('MARACs')
 - Drug and Alcohol Teams
 - Youth Offending and Probation Services
 - Voluntary sector organisations
- 7.2 We encourage services to have a Domestic Abuse Champion who is responsible for:
- establishing links with organisations locally
 - Making referrals to MARAC

Champions should receive accredited training to carry out [Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment](#) ('DASH') [Assessments](#) and referrals. Please contact DAAS to nominate champions.

7.3 When assessing what action to take we will consider:

- The extent of risk to the household from the perpetrator and whether or not it is safe to remain in the property or locality
- The presence/absence of children and child protection issues
- The wishes of the person experiencing abuse
- Existing support networks

7.4 Housing options that may be considered include:

- Remaining in the original home with or without the perpetrator.
- Access to sanctuary and/or civil protection orders such as Non-Molestation Orders
- Leaving the original home on a temporary basis and subsequently either returning to the original home but without the perpetrator. This may require a referral to MARAC or a sanctuary
- Leaving the original home permanently and seeking re-housing
- Refuge accommodation or emergency housing

7.5 Where a customer feels there is an immediate risk by staying in their home and wants to leave, we will support referrals to the local authority Homelessness Team or a specialist [domestic abuse refuge](#).

7.6 We will report any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of anyone under the age of 18 as a safeguarding concern, without exception.

7.7 We will support customers who wish to remain in their property and may be able to provide additional security measures where we are the landlord. For example, we will consider providing a panic alarm, additional lighting or locks. We may also provide a direct dial number to the police and a phone to use. In some specific situations, where funding is available, we will consider the possibility of installing a safe/sanctuary room within a property, Ring doorbell or security cameras.

7.8 Where appropriate we will support customers to access the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) to obtain information about a partner (or prospective partner) where there are concerns that the individual has committed domestic abuse in the past.

7.9 Implementation of this policy is supported by detailed procedures for:

- [Customers residing in our services](#)
- [Customers receiving floating or community support services](#)
- [Staff Guidance and Risk Assessment](#)

8. Police Engagement

- 8.1 All safeguarding concerns must be reported to the local authority. When staff become aware of concerns which are also offences, or potential offences, they should also seek to support and encourage customers to report these to the police.
- 8.2 If staff believe that someone may be at immediate risk of harm then they should contact the police immediately whether or not the customer consents.
- 8.3 In other cases where staff become aware of an offence, or potential offence, and there is no immediate risk of harm to anyone, then staff should support customers to report the issue to the police or contact the police themselves.
- 8.4 Where a customer does not consent to reporting a crime to police staff should seek to discuss this with the customer, understand the reasons why and provide them with information and support. If they continue to withhold consent, staff must discuss this with a manager. Whilst the views of the customer must always be respected as much as possible, staff may decide that the risks and severity of the offence mean that the police should be involved in any event. In some cases, it may be best to have an informal discussion with the police to help decide whether a police response is necessary, but staff need to be aware that police are under obligation to log any crime that is reported to them. Please contact DAAS for advice at LondonDAASreferrals@lookahead.org.uk
- 8.5 If a customer has been the victim of sexual assault or rape and does not want to disclose this to police, they must always be referred to the local sexual assault referral centre who can take evidence which can be used later if the customer changes their mind. It is mandatory to report sexual assault to DAAS as they can provide ISVA support. Staff should respect the customer's views not to inform the police in these instances, unless staff have specific knowledge of someone being at immediate risk of harm or where there is any reason to believe the alleged perpetrator may be someone holding a position of trust.
- 8.6 In all cases where staff are aware of an offence, or potential offence, but it is proposed that the police are not informed, this must be escalated to the Head of Safeguarding and Quality and/or a Director of Operations before a final decision is reached.

Information

[Raneem's Law](#)

Procedures

[Identifying Perpetrators Procedure](#)

IDVA Protocols

[IDVA MARAC Protocol](#)

[IDVA Move On Protocol](#)

[IDVA Case Management Protocol](#)

[IDVA Confidentiality Protocol](#)

[IDVA Continuous Improvement Protocol](#)

[IDVA Co-Ordinated Response Protocol](#)

[IDVA Eligibility Protocol](#)
[IDVA Safety & Support Planning Protocol](#)
[IDVA Assessment & Intake Protocol](#)
[IDVA Risk Management Protocol](#)
[IDVA Safe Onward Referrals Protocol](#)
[IDVA Storage of Client Files Protocol](#)
[IDVA Interpretation & Translation Protocol](#)

Refuge Protocols

[Children in Refuges Protocol](#)
[Refuge MARAC Protocol](#)
[Refuge Location Disclosure Protocol](#)
[Refuge Move On Protocol](#)
[Refuge Referral & Intake Protocol](#)
[Refuge Risk Management Protocol](#)
[Refuge Safety & Support Planning Protocol](#)
[Refuge Casework Management Protocol](#)
[Refuge Continuous Improvement Protocol](#)
[Refuge Service Eligibility Protocol](#)
[Refuge Onward Safe Referrals Protocol](#)
[Staying Away From Refuge Protocol](#)
[Refuge Women Only Spaces Protocol](#)
[Refuge Returning Home Safety Protocol](#)

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

We will comply with our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy which can be found by clicking [Here](#) or visiting our website at www.lookahead.org.uk

MARAC referrals can be made without the consent of the customer.

Policy Sign Off and Ownership

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Version	3.1
Equality Impact Assessment	We recognise that people can experience domestic abuse regardless of how they identify or their personal circumstances in relation to the protected characteristics. We take a risk based approach to tailoring our support to individuals.
Who was consulted?	Community Safety Manager, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Safer & Stronger Communities Manager, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Founder, The Sharan Project

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Related Policies/Procedures	Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy Safeguarding Adults Policy Safeguarding Children Policy Incident Management Policy Missing Customers Policy Supervision Policy Positive Pathways & Casework Management Policy Quality Management Policy
Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Version History			
Version	Date	Description of Changes	Author
3.1	Feb 2026	Updated description of stalking and reference to the DAAS Service added.	Rachel Miller
3.0	July 2024	Review of any change in legislation	Yvette Hazelden
2.0	July 2023	Planned review. Updated legislation and best practice	Yvette Hazelden and Rebecca Swaine