



Policy for Supporting Residents experiencing Domestic Abuse

South Norfolk Council

Policy for Supporting Customers experiencing Domestic Abuse

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1.0 Introduction

Domestic Abuse is unacceptable. South Norfolk Council is committed to ensuring all customers affected by domestic abuse are treated in a sympathetic and sensitive manner by trained staff, acting in a non-judgemental way.

This policy sets out the services we provide. Our aim is to improve victim/survivor safety and housing security and to hold perpetrators to account for their harm.

As part of this we will:

- Work with other agencies to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse,
- Include Domestic Abuse Legislation in the delivery of our housing services,
- Provide best practice Domestic Abuse procedures to our housing professionals.
- Support victims and survivors to remain in their own homes, where safe to do so.
- Support people and help them to make their own choices.
- Share information in a secure and timely way
- Safeguard adults and children affected by domestic abuse.
- Support perpetrators to address their behaviour.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with Norfolk-wide domestic abuse strategies, partner agencies, staff, victims, and survivors to identify their needs and how to support them.

Domestic abuse does not discriminate and can affect anyone of any gender, ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexuality, disability, or lifestyle. We recognise domestic abuse occurs in all societies and impacts all genders. However, it is noted that most survivors of domestic abuse are women and children and women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence and sexual abuse.

We accept that, for many, it can take repeated incidents before they seek help and may take months or years to approach us. When help is sought, they will be believed, and help provided will be sympathetic, appropriate and consistent. We will listen to their needs and wishes in agreeing a course of action.

We have a non-judgemental approach to relationships and understand the first contact may be your first step to ask for help.

Note on language.

Throughout this document we may use language to refer to people seeking domestic abuse support as; victims, survivors, those experiencing/have experienced domestic abuse and victim/survivors. This is to recognise that people may be at different stages of their journey and reflects how they may view themselves.

2.0 What is Domestic Abuse

South Norfolk Council recognise and acknowledge their legal duties and obligations under legislation relating to domestic abuse:

Statutory Definition of Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, has defines domestic abuse as:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
economic abuse - meaning any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.
- psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

Who can experience domestic abuse?

Definition of "personally connected".

For the purposes of this Act, two people are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies:

- they are, or have been, married to each other
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
- they are relatives.

For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

- the person is a parent of the child, or
- the person has parental responsibility for the child.

The full definition is at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents>

The 2021 statutory definition clearly emphasises that domestic abuse is not solely physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.

As part of the definition, children are explicitly recognised as victims-survivors if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

More information on types of abuse is available from NIDAS at <https://nidasnorfolk.co.uk/domestic-abuse/>

A further range of measures and initiatives include targeted work with perpetrators and the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices.

3.0 How to contact us:

We will treat all reports of domestic abuse with respect, sympathy and confidentiality and will listen to the needs and wishes of the survivor in agreeing a course of action.

You can contact the Help Hub on **01508 533933 or 01603 430431**.

Email: helphub@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Our Domestic Abuse webpage has more information on the services we offer:

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/domestic-abuse>

If you are concerned about yours or a loved one's relationship, it's important to get advice and support to stay safe.

3.1 Support we offer.

All reports of domestic abuse will be responded to, including any made in confidence and those made by someone not directly involved, such as partner agencies, neighbours and contractors.

We work with our partner agencies to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse. We will arrange a safe time, place, or communication method which is convenient for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

We recognise the diverse needs of our communities and will establish what requirements are needed, for example a language or BSL interpreter. We will not ask for any undue or unnecessary information at any stage of the support we offer.

We will consider all other statutory or legislative constraints and tools available, or that either party may be subject to, for example but not limited to injunctions.

We can work with perpetrators, where appropriate and where we can do so without compromising the safety of individuals affected by domestic abuse.

In cases where our employees are experiencing domestic abuse, we use South Norfolk Staff Domestic Abuse Policy.

3.2 Housing

South Norfolk Council is committed to supporting people to remain safely in their homes, where appropriate to do so. Our Domestic Abuse Support Specialists can assist with safety planning advice and support. Specialised safety planning referrals will be made to our specialist domestic abuse partners.

We will house you in line with Housing and Homelessness Legislation and our Housing Allocations Policy and any subsequent variations.

3.3 Sanctuary Scheme

The Sanctuary Scheme is a victim centred initiative. It aims to allow victim-survivors of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and help them to stay closer to their support networks.

More information on the Sanctuary Scheme and referral form is available from <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/sanctuaryscheme>

3.4 Tenancy

If a victim-survivor of domestic abuse loses their secure tenancy as a result of the abuse, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to grant another secure tenancy to the victim-survivor if they rehouse them into a further social tenancy.

On occasion there may be a period of time whereby alternative accommodation is suitable to allow support and guidance to be put into place to support them in their new tenancy.

Granting a sole tenancy to the original property will depend on the person's housing needs and whether it would be considered safe for them to remain there.

These decisions will be made in consultation with the victim-survivor and other professionals. We advise victims-survivors to seek advice and support to be fully informed of their options and advice where appropriate to avoid losing their tenancy.

Agreements are in place with Housing Associations that those fleeing Domestic Abuse should not be offered a lesser tenancy agreement than they currently have in place.

3.5 Safe Accommodation

Refuge accommodation: a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support as part of the accommodation. Victim-survivors, including their children, must be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.

Specialist safe accommodation: specialist refuges for ethnically diverse communities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Questioning and other ("LGBTQ+") communities, and disabled victims-survivors and their children. These may provide single sex or gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims-survivors who share a protected characteristic(s). This includes services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristics and/or have complex needs.

Move-on and / or second stage accommodation: these are interchangeable terms for projects temporarily accommodating victim-survivors. It includes families who no longer

need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for some time, before moving to fully independent and permanent accommodation.

More information is given in **Support in Safe Accommodation for Norfolk**

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/safety/domestic-abuse/support-in-safe-accommodation-for-norfolk-2021-2024.pdf>

3.6 Help Hub

Customers and professionals in need of advice and support in relation to current or previous experiences have access to our Help Hub via a number of channels, to best suit their preferred means of engagement.

- We offer a phonenumber and web form (detailed in 3.0), facilitated by our Assessment and Triage Team
- Customers can also access support and advice via their GP practice, by seeing a Social Prescriber.
- The Help Hub Communities Team has an outreach presence across the district and support and advice can be accessed from trained staff at a variety of locations and events.

When a customer makes contact the Help Hub will provide initial advice and information and facilitate the completion of the relevant risk assessments (where it is safe to do so). Based on the information gathered from the customer and support services, the Help Hub will link the customer to the most appropriate support provision.

Where a victim-survivor is requiring support with the impact of previous or historic domestic abuse experiences we will engage with them around a variety of needs, including their financial needs and wellbeing through our Financial Wellbeing and Community Connector services. We can also refer victims and survivors of domestic abuse to specialist organisations who provide legal advice and well-being services to survivors of domestic abuse.

Where debt or financial support is needed, we offer advice from our in-house Debt and welfare rights Advisors. We work in partnership with the South Norfolk IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) and Homeless Team to assess and support individuals who present as homeless due to domestic abuse.

We will contact animal organisations who offer support with cats and dogs for anyone fleeing domestic abuse. Full details are on our Domestic Abuse webpage.

3.7 Support for children affected by Domestic abuse.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, where children of the household have seen, witnessed or experienced the effects of domestic abuse, they will also be considered as

victims of domestic abuse. This recognises the long-lasting impacts of domestic abuse and takes steps to ensure that specific children and young person support is available.

We recognise that concerns about children remaining at their school or having to leave support networks with families and friends can be barriers for victims to leave abusive relationships or be reluctant to move from an area.

To help this, we will:

- Treat children and young people of the family as victims-survivors of domestic abuse.
- Refer children and young people for appropriate support.
- Consider children and young people needs, taking into consideration any special educational needs that can only be met by a specific facility or vital educational years such as GCSE or A-Level studies.

3.8 Support for those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Organisations helping victims and survivors with NRPF should make a referral to the People from Abroad Team at Norfolk County Council.

More information is in the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Housing Protocol.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/safety/domestic-abuse/support-in-safe-accommodation-for-norfolk-2021-2024.pdf>

Support Available:

- Police - in an emergency **999**, non-emergency **101**
- Black Country Women's Aid: 0121 553 0090
- National LGBT+ Domestic abuse helpline: 0800 999 5428
- The Haven, 24-hour referral line: 08000 194 400 or www.havenrefuge.org.uk
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 24 hours: 0808 2000247
- Karma Nirvana: 0800 5999 247 / Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
- The Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 (Male victims of domestic violence)
- RESPECT Phoneline: 0808 802 4040. (Anyone concerned about their use of violence and abuse towards their partner)

Further information is available on our Domestic Abuse webpage at

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/domestic-abuse>

4.0 Perpetrator Management

When supporting someone experiencing abuse, we will take account of their wishes and not assume that they wish the matter to be reported to the police or that they want a shared living arrangement to end. If the survivor wishes to remain with the perpetrator, any decisions around support will be based on the specific risks associated with the situation.

Our Housing staff receive specialist training in Domestic Abuse and how to refer to other specialist Domestic Abuse services.

It is also recognised that, from time to time, Housing Advice and Housing Services staff may be expected to support a perpetrator with their housing options.

Where counter allegations of harm exist, we will work with specialist domestic abuse and partner agencies to identify the primary perpetrator and to ensure support is provided to the victim. We will never blame the victim/survivor for the abuse they have endured.

We will also ensure that information and support is available to perpetrators who wish to address their behaviour. This can include signposting to specialist services for further advice.

Safeguarding is everybody's business, with everyone playing a part in preventing, identifying, and reporting abuse. South Norfolk Council are committed to working collaboratively to improve the outcomes for adults and children who are experiencing domestic abuse.

5.0 Prevention and Awareness

We are committed to:

- Ensuring all staff working for or on behalf of South Norfolk Council are familiar with policies and procedures relating to domestic abuse and safeguarding.
- Providing training to all employees in recognising domestic abuse, how to respond appropriately and respectfully and how to record and report it.
- Offering Awareness Raising and Training on Domestic Abuse to Members.
- Appropriately sharing information with statutory agencies and partner organisations about individuals who may be at risk from domestic abuse with due regard to confidentiality and information sharing protocols.
- Meeting our statutory safeguarding requirements in line with existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a resident or child.

6.0 Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff

South Norfolk Council has a 'zero tolerance' of any form of domestic abuse and is committed to responding appropriately to concerns about anyone who works for, or on

behalf of, South Norfolk in any capacity in relation to their behaviour and conduct towards others (in any setting, not just in the workplace).

If concerns are raised, we will deal with the matter internally using existing HR Policies and practices which will not be confused with any statutory investigations which may be required and carried out by Social Care and the Police.

South Norfolk Council will seek the advice and assistance of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in managing any case if this involves a person in a position of trust with a child.

7.0 Monitoring and review

Where an allegation of abuse is made all agencies have a responsibility to keep clear and accurate records. It is essential that evidence is protected, to show what action has been taken, what decisions have been made and why.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if there are significant changes required in the light of best practice and any changes to legislation and Government guidance. This will include staff and customer feedback, local Domestic Homicide Review, Serious Adult Review recommendations and findings.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

We are committed to encouraging equality and diversity, both as local authorities and as employers. We strive to remove any barriers to enable engagement and to provide access to our services for all members of the community and we are committed to eliminating all forms of unlawful discrimination. Further information is in our [equality-and-diversity-policy \(southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk\)](https://southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity-policy)

Our joint Public Sector Equality Duty annual statement, which is published on our website, provides details of how the Councils advance equality of opportunity, and promote good relations with protected groups by engaging with, and supporting, individuals, local community groups and cultural events

We recognise that:

- All adults and children have a right to equal protection from domestic abuse, regardless of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity or any other equality characteristic.

- Some adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- We are committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

9.0 Information sharing.

We will only share information with other agencies, under existing data sharing agreements, with the consent of the person experiencing any domestic abuse, or if:

- The information is required for the protection of children.
- We are required by law to share the information.
- There are legal reasons to protect a person without capacity.

Any decisions made by professionals that affect the person experiencing domestic abuse should be proportionate and take into account their wishes (where known) as closely as possible. If you have information that you do not wish to be shared with our partners that may impact your safety, please advise us at the time.

Sharing information at the right time, with the right people, is good practice in domestic abuse and adult and children's safeguarding. More information on this is at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/domestic-abuse/information-for-professionals/information-sharing>

South Norfolk will appropriately share information with statutory agencies and partner organisations on a need-to-know basis about individuals who may be at risk from domestic abuse with due regard to confidentiality and information sharing protocols.

10 Complaints

Any complaints should be addressed in line with our complaints procedures.

The responding officer may discuss the complaint with the Domestic Abuse Lead or one of the organisation's Domestic Abuse Champions to ensure that matter is viewed through an informed domestic abuse lens.

An overview of our complaints procedure is available on the website. <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/council/compliments-suggestions-complaints>

Appendix

1 Associated Procedures

Housing Register

Social housing in South Norfolk is allocated through our [Housing Register - Home Options](#).

2 Procedures & Policies used to create this document.

South Norfolk Council Policies

- South Norfolk Children, Young Persons and Adult Safeguarding Protocol
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Staff Policy and Procedures
- General Data Protection Regulations (2018)
- Equality and Diversity Policy 2022-2025

Norfolk Wide Policies

- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Housing Protocol 2022-2025
- Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy for Norfolk 2021-24
- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2025 (link to be added)
- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Prevention Strategy
- Norfolk Sexual Violence Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Partnerships Arrangements (DAPPA)
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

Legislation

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021(Eng. & Wales),
- Child Safeguarding legislation including Children Act 2004,
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- [Housing Act 1996](#)
- [Homelessness Act 2002](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#).
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)

Our Partnerships

[NIDAS](#) (Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service)

Housing Advice and Allocations Lead Officer (HAALO) group.

Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (NDAPB)

Norfolk Community Safety Partnership (NCSP)

Norfolk's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group (DASVG)

List of all procedures and policies are on our Domestic Abuse webpage.