



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policy for supporting residents that are experiencing domestic abuse

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. East Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to ensuring that all residents affected by domestic abuse are supported in a sympathetic and sensitive manner and that employees act in a non-judgemental way.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the level of service we aim to provide.
- 1.3. At all times it is the council's intention to increase the safety of those experiencing domestic abuse and housing security, and for perpetrators to be held accountable for their behaviour.
- 1.4. For the purposes of this policy, the statutory definition of abuse applies and incorporates behaviours of violence as well as other forms of abuse, including economic abuse and coercive control.
- 1.5. The council has signed an agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council to work within their Adult Safeguarding Policy guidelines and procedures. More information can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/adults/keeping-safe/adult-safeguarding-and-mental-capacity/adult-safeguarding.

- 1.6. The council has a corporate policy regarding safeguarding and therefore this Domestic Abuse Policy should be read in conjunction with our Child and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy, which provides an overarching approach to the council's response to all safeguarding matters (<https://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Child%20and%20Adults%20at%20Risk%20Safeguarding%20Policy%202022.pdf>).
- 1.7. In addition, the Lettings Social Housing Providers Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy (www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/adults-board/cpsabprocedures/cpsabsafeguardingpolicy/) are related policies.

2. Statutory definition of domestic abuse

- 2.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines that a 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
 - the behaviour is abusive
- 2.1.1. The 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
 - psychological, emotional or other abuse
- It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- 2.2. Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to:
- acquire, use or maintain money or other property
 - obtain goods or services
- 2.3. The domestic abuse definition includes the situation where Person A aims their behaviour at Person B even if the conduct is directed at someone else, for example, B's child.

3. Who can experience domestic abuse?

- 3.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines two people as 'personally connected' if:
- 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
 - they are relatives
- 3.2. A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:
- the person is a parent of the child
 - the person has parental responsibility for the child

4. Support

- 4.1. We will treat all reports of domestic abuse with respect, empathy and confidentiality and we will listen to the needs and wishes of the survivor in agreeing a course of action.
- 4.2. We take a client-centred or survivor approach to those experiencing domestic abuse and will always make the safety, dignity and well-being of the person the priority.
- 4.3. All reports of domestic abuse will be investigated in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council's Adult Safeguarding Policy guidelines and procedures, our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and our Child and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy.
- 4.4. Each case will be different. We will always place an individual's needs at the forefront of any support we provide by working in a trauma informed way. This will include (but not be limited to) physical needs, mental needs, well-being, communication needs and each of the nine characteristics of the Equality Act (2010).
- 4.5. We can refer the person to other agencies that provide specialist support and guidance.
- 4.6. Domestic abuse is a criminal offence and we will encourage people to report it to the police, whether they are the victim of abuse or a witness to abuse. In an emergency, always call 999.

- 4.7. We can also refer domestic abuse victims to courses, such as the Freedom Programme, which "examines the roles played by attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive perpetrators and the responses of victims and survivors. The aim is to help them to make sense of and understand what has happened to them."
- 4.8. We are part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership, which offers support, services and information to survivors of domestic abuse. It consists of many key agencies in the area, such as (but not limited to) East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership, the police and Cambridgeshire County Council.

5. Multi-agency working

- 5.1. We recognise that no single organisation will have a complete picture of the life of a family or individual living with domestic abuse but may have insights that are crucial to their support and safety.
- 5.2. We recognise the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and to contribute to an effective co-ordinated community response.
- 5.3. Examples of other partners include (but are not limited to):
- the police
 - specialist domestic abuse support agencies
 - Independent Domestic-Based Violence Advocates (IDVAs)
 - legal advisory services
 - victim support services
 - education
 - social care
 - Learning Disabilities Partnership (LDP)
 - Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer(s) (where required)
 - other housing partners (further details about information sharing and consent is provided in section 6 of this policy)

- 5.4. Some employees throughout the council receive enhanced training and are Domestic Abuse Support Champions. They are available to offer support and advice to colleagues in relation to good practice. Their role is also to raise awareness of domestic abuse and ensure other employees know how to access support.
- 5.5. Members of our Housing Community Advice team, Environmental Health teams and the Communities and Partnerships team also attend multi-agency working groups and panels on a regular basis, as well as share information internally between teams.
- 5.6. Partnership groups include:
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership
 - Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership
 - Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Senior Management Board
 - Sub Regional Homeless Leads Group
 - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
 - Cambridge Perpetrator Panel
 - East Cambridgeshire Domestic Homicide reviews
 - East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Problem Solving Group, Adults
 - East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Task and Finish Group

- Officers take advantage of opportunities to participate in regional and national discussion forums through attendance at regional Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) events and through participation in the National Housing Federation's Domestic Abuse core group.
- 6. Information sharing and consent**
- 6.1. We will only share information with other agencies 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
- 6.2. As stated in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy 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. However, any wishes of the individual cannot undermine the council's legal duty to act.
- 7. Housing**
- 7.1. Our team recognise the importance of the Whole Housing Approach (WHA) www.dahalliance.org.uk/innovations-in-practice/whole-housing-approach/what-is-the-whole-housing-approach to ensure access to a range of housing options and initiatives, which give choice to people experiencing domestic abuse regarding relocation or remaining in their existing accommodation.
- 7.2. Our team receive domestic abuse awareness training and is also trained in completing Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Violence (DASH) risk assessments.
- 7.3. The Housing team will offer advice and support to assist those experiencing domestic abuse to identify possible ways of resolving their housing situation.
- 7.4. Victims of harassment, violence or abuse may get preferential banding for housing in accordance with the council's Lettings Policy. In addition, the Lettings Policy (www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/LETTINGS%20POLICY%20%2005.07.21_0.pdf) recognises the impact that economic control can have on an individual's finances and has a case-by-case approach to debt incurred as a result of domestic abuse or harassment.
- 7.5. We can help with access to emergency accommodation or access to refuge services where required.
- 7.6. The Housing team hold a Safe at Home budget, which may be available to provide additional home security to those wishing to remain in their own home. Other financial support (such as access to Rent Deposit Scheme) may be available to people wishing to relocate.
- 7.7. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis, including consideration of the risks. Where appropriate, we will seek specialist advice, for example, from the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) Service.

8. Joint tenancies	9. Taking action	10. Repairs and security	11. Perpetrator management
<p>8.1. Where a victim 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 if they rehouse them.</p> <p>8.2. Granting a sole tenancy to the original property will depend on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the person’s housing needs • whether it would be considered safe for them to remain there <p>8.3. Decisions will be made in consultation with the victim and other professionals, such as the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service, with risk and client wishes in mind.</p> <p>8.4. The victim should always seek advice and support to be fully informed of their options and to avoid losing their tenancy. It is important to let the Housing team know about this, especially in situations where someone wants to remain in the area.</p>	<p>9.1. The council have signed an agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council to work within their Adult Safeguarding Policy guidelines and procedures.</p> <p>9.2. We can refer victims to access advice on their options and may be able to provide support when taking legal action against the person perpetrating the domestic abuse.</p>	<p>10.1. In some circumstances, we may be able to offer extra security measures at the property through our ‘Safe at Home’ budget.</p> <p>10.2. We will also refer people to other initiatives, such as 24/7 locks who can also provide assistance.</p>	<p>11.1. 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.</p> <p>11.2. If the survivor wishes to remain with the perpetrator, any decisions around support will be based on the specific risks associated with the situation. The Housing team are trained in Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Violence (DASH) risk assessments and are encouraged to refer to the specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service where there are concerns, to ensure safety planning is in place.</p> <p>11.3. Where it is appropriate for enforcement action to be taken (for example, reporting to the police, or action against a tenancy), council employees will do so.</p> <p>11.4. It is also recognised that, the Housing team may be expected to support a perpetrator with their housing.</p> <p>11.5. There is no blanket policy to prevent perpetrators from accessing social housing via the Home-Link allocation system, although the Lettings Policy does allow exclusions based on behaviour.</p>

	12. Prevention and awareness	13. Related legislation and regulations	14. Related documents
11.6. Any decisions to exclude someone, will be on a case by case basis and informed by the level of risk to associated parties if an exclusion was to exist.	12.1. The council is committed to learning from good practice and providing appropriate training for frontline employees. This will include domestic abuse awareness for all council training for key roles and the introduction of Domestic Abuse Support Champions throughout the council.	The Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Internal Domestic Abuse Employee Policy (HR)
11.7. Where counter allegations of harm exist, the council will work with specialist domestic abuse and partner agencies to identify the primary perpetrator and to ensure support is provided to the victim.	12.2. We will actively seek to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse and encourage anyone that is experiencing it to engage with support services.	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014)	Lettings Policy
11.8. The council will also ensure that information and support is available to perpetrators who wish to address their behaviour. This can include signposting to Respect and other specialist services for further advice.	12.3. We are committed to achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and seek to learn and improve services through the accreditation process.	Care Act (2014)	Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy
11.9. The council will work to rehouse perpetrators, when appropriate, to allow victims and children to stay in their property.	12.4. We will raise awareness of domestic abuse through information shared on our website, our social media platforms and with relevant partners and agencies.	Civil Partnership Act (2004)	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy
		Clare’s Law (2017)	
		Crime and Security Act (2010)	
		Data Protection Act (2018)	
		Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act (2004)	
		Equality Act (2010)	
		Family Law Act (1996)	
		Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003)	
		Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007)	
		Homelessness Act (2002)	
		Housing Act (1996) as amended	
		Protection from Harassment Act (1997)	
		Serious Crime Act (2015)	

15. Equality and diversity

- 15.1. As a council, we are committed to delivering services that narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community, and to ensuring that protected groups are included and have their voices heard (see our website for more information) www.eastcambs.gov.uk/east-cambs-district-council/single-equality-scheme.
- 15.2. We are also obliged to comply with the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty.
- 15.3. We believe that all people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we are determined to ensure that everyone entitled to use our services receives fair and equitable treatment.
- 15.4. One way that we can achieve this is by ensuring that those who do not use English as a first language (including users of British Sign Language) still have equal access to our services through the provision of interpretation and translation services.
- 15.5. We are committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- 15.6. An equality impact assessment has been carried out for this policy.

16. Complaints

- 16.1. Complaints will be addressed in line with our complaints procedure. The responding officer may discuss the complaint with the Domestic Abuse Lead or one of the council's Domestic Abuse Support Champions to ensure the matter is viewed through an informed domestic abuse lens.
- 16.2. The complaints procedure is available on our website www.eastcambs.gov.uk/customer-services/customer-feedback-and-complaints.

17. Review

- 17.1. This policy and its procedures will be reviewed every 2 years. However, earlier reassessment may be required if there are changes in operations and/or legislation.

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