

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Author(s): Community Safety Manager

1. Our policy statement

Sage Homes recognises freedom from fear and abuse as essential to wellbeing and that domestic abuse has a serious and harmful long-term impact on victims, survivors, and their families, and we are committed to minimising the harm from domestic abuse in our communities. Our Tenancy Agreement states:

'Not to threaten or commit acts of domestic abuse on any members of the Tenant's household whilst in their home or neighbourhood.'

- 1.1. This policy aims to ensure that those who are subjected to domestic abuse are dealt with in an understanding and non-judgemental manner, in accordance with their individual needs.
- 1.2. As a landlord we may see warning signs relating to domestic abuse, so we aim to provide early support by our trained staff, guidance and signpost to specialist services for people.

2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to all homes managed directly by Sage Homes or anyone acting on our behalf.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all of Sage Homes' tenancy types, including general needs social housing tenancies, whether for new-build or relet homes and shared ownership homes. There may be restrictions on the action we are able to take depending on the tenancy type.

3. Associated frameworks

- 3.1. This policy has been drafted with consideration of relevant legislation, including but not limited to the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) and Victims and Prisoners Act (2024) as well as other acts appropriate to this policy.

4. Principles

- 4.1. We recognise that victims face many difficult decisions daily and that leaving an abusive relationship is not easy. We will give victims time and space, and not pressure them into making decisions or taking action.
- 4.2. We are committed to supporting victims and survivors who find themselves in relationships with abusive and violent partners, and to helping them rebuild their lives away from harm.
- 4.3. We will support survivors to remain in their home if they prefer and it is safe to do so and will engage with all relevant support organisations to increase home security where needed.
- 4.4. We are aware of the damaging effect of experiencing domestic abuse and growing up in a family where someone is abusive or violent.
- 4.5. We are dedicated to safeguarding and supporting individuals and providing a multi-agency response, including the police and any referrals to a Multi-Agency Risk

Assessment Conference (MARAC) at an early stage.

- 4.6. Our customers, staff and any third parties can be sure we will take appropriate action following a victim-centred and risk-based approach in dealing with threats of domestic abuse, including ongoing threats against survivors.
- 4.7. We will engage with local specialist services and local partnership meetings to ensure a victim-centred approach is taken to all aspects of housing and rehousing. This means we assist you to reach a decision which you feel best secures your safety. Any action we take is with your consent. The only exception is if there is a risk of serious harm to you or others. In addition, we will ensure any information on the situation is kept securely or shared in line with legislation.
- 4.8. We will work in a reflective way using the experiences of victims, the impact of our actions, and information on cases across our homes when reviewing and improving our services.

5. Our definition

- 5.1. We recognise that abuse is not always physical, and it does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone regardless of their gender, gender reassignment, sexuality, age, disability, race, religion or beliefs, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity or any other protected characteristic.
- 5.2. Sage Homes uses the statutory definition of domestic abuse set out in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) which sets out:
- 5.3. 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:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4))
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to:

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services.

For the purposes of this Act 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).

5.4. **Coercive and Controlling Behaviour**

Controlling and coercive behaviour is defined by Section 77 of the Serious Crime Act (2015), as:

A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This could include:

- Controlling who they see, or what they wear
- Controlling their medication, or preventing them from seeing medical professionals such as doctors or dentists
- Isolating them from friends, family or other means of support
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Economic abuse.

5.5. **Personally Connected**

The statutory definition of domestic abuse sees that two people are 'personally connected' to each other if any of the following applies:

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

5.6. **Children as Victims of Domestic Abuse**

Children are seen as victims of domestic abuse in their own right under the statutory definition. This means where behaviour of a person ('A') towards another person ('B') is domestic abuse where the child:

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

A child is related to a person if the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or the child and the person are relatives. Child means person under the age of 18 years and 'parental responsibility' has the same meaning as in the Children Act (1989). The term 'relative' has the meaning given by section 63 (1) of the Family Law Act (1996).

5.7. **So-called honour-based violence and abuse**

So-called honour-based abuse includes offences which may have been committed to protect the perceived 'honour' of a family or a community and can incorporate many of the types of abuse detailed above. It is often carried out by family members, but victims can also come under pressure from the wider community who will seek to support the family in their actions.

6. Equality and diversity

- 6.1. Sage is committed to make sure all services are accessible to all our residents. Our staff will be trained to communicate appropriately with you, and they have the relevant information and access to translation services to make sure they fully meet your needs.
- 6.2. We will provide an individual based service to our customers based on their needs. We understand that residents have different needs and may face different barriers to accessing support. For example, victims from Black and minoritised communities may face barriers including:
 - Language barriers
 - Perceived family 'honour', shame or stigma
 - Immigration status/no recourse to public funding
 - Cultural or community expectations
 - Fear of 'honour' based violence and abuse
 - Fear of rejection by their community
 - Concerns about racism
 - Barriers to accessing specialist support.
- 6.3. We are aware that victims with disabilities or caring responsibilities may face barriers including:
 - Reliance on the abuser for care and support.
 - The victim may be the carer of the abuser, and feel obliged to continue to the support and endure the abuse
 - Being dependent on the abuser who has fostered an environment of lack of dignity, making them believe the abuse is normal and thereby minimising its impact
 - Concern of finding a suitable property for their needs
 - Not having knowledge of support they could be entitled to
 - Myths and stereotypes
 - Barriers to accessing specialist support.
- 6.4. Victims who are LGBT+ may face barriers in disclosing abuse, including:
 - Failing to recognise their experience as domestic abuse
 - Belief that intimate partner violence 'doesn't happen in same-sex relationships
 - Previous bad experiences with reporting/support services
 - Concerns about homophobia and transphobia in service provision

- Belief that non-LGBT+ services are not for LGBT+ people
 - Belief that disclosure will not be taken seriously
 - Concerns around disclosing sexual orientation or gender identity
 - Knowledge of and connectedness to local LGBT+ community
 - Barriers to accessing specialist support.
- 6.5. This policy will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other defined within the [Equality Act 2010](#).
- 6.6. On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print. Our website also has accessibility tools allowing you to personalise each web page to make it easier to read and to download content as audio files.

7. Delivery of this policy

- 7.1. This policy should be read alongside:
- Hate Crime Policy
 - Safeguarding Children and Young Persons Policy
 - Safeguarding Adults Policy
 - Lettings and Allocations Policy
 - Antisocial Behaviour Policy
 - Equality Opportunities Policy
 - Data Protection Policy.
- 7.2. The effective delivery of this policy including training, guidance and support required by staff for implementation of this policy will be provided by the Community Safety Team.

8. Policy review

- 8.1. We will review this policy at least every three years to make sure it remains relevant and accurate unless:
- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, making sure that it continues to meet our aims and industry best practice
 - We identify a need for policy changes as a result of customer and stakeholder feedback, complaints, or findings from any independent organisations.

Version	Checked by	Amendments	Approved at/by	Date of Approval	Published by	Date of Review
2.4	Community Safety Manager	Strategic review and update to corporate template	Leadership Team	May 23	Office Management	May 26
			Customer and People Committee	May 23		
2.5	Community Safety Manager	Strategic review	Customer & People Committee	Nov 24	Policy & Service Improvement	Nov 27