

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Author(s): Head of Resident Services

1. Our policy statement

- 1.1. Sage Homes takes domestic abuse seriously. We know that everyone has the right to feel safe in their home, and that domestic abuse has a lasting impact on victims, survivors and their families
- 1.2. We are committed to:
 - treating everyone who comes to us with compassion and without judgement
 - making sure our staff can spot the signs of domestic abuse and know how to respond
 - working with specialist services and other organisations to get you the right support
 - acting against those who cause harm in our homes and communities
 - learning and improving through the experiences of the people we support
- 1.3. This policy sets out what you can expect from us if you are experiencing, or at risk of, domestic abuse. It applies to all homes we own or manage, across all tenancy types, including general needs and shared ownership.
- 1.4. It supports compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and aligns with the Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community, and Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards of the Regulator of Social Housing (2024).
- 1.5. We also recognise the housing protections provided under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) and the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. These ensure that survivors are treated as having a priority need for accommodation and that tenancy rights are preserved when victims are rehoused for safety reasons.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It means abusive behaviour by one person towards another, where both are aged 16 or over and are personally connected. This personal connection does not have to be ongoing. Domestic abuse can still occur after a relationship has ended.
- 2.2. Domestic abuse is rooted in power and control and can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour. It may involve a range of abusive behaviours used to harm, intimidate, isolate or control another person.
- 2.3. We take a survivor-centred approach, prioritising the safety, choice and voice of those experiencing abuse, and recognising the impact this has on their ability to feel safe and secure in their home.
- 2.4. Abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:
 - Physical abuse – hitting, choking, pushing or other violence
 - Sexual abuse – rape, sexual assault or withholding access to contraception
 - Threatening or violent behaviour – damaging property, harming pets
 - Controlling or coercive behaviour – restricting independence, monitoring movements or communication
 - Stalking and harassment – following you, repeated calls or messages, turning up at your workplace
 - Economic abuse – controlling your finances or access to money, building up debt in

your name

- Psychological and emotional abuse – intimidation, humiliation, or manipulation
- Tech or social media abuse – online exploitation, tracking or sharing private information
- So called honour-based abuse – including female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

This list is not exhaustive, and we will always take a holistic and risk-informed view of each individual situation.

- 2.5. Abuse can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour. It does not matter which and the above list is not exhaustive.
- 2.6. Domestic abuse can directly impact a person's housing stability and safety within the home, including where perpetrators use the home, tenancy or shared household arrangements as a means of control.

3. Children as victims

- 3.1. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are recognised as victims in their own right. If a child sees, hears or experiences the effects of abuse, they are a victim. We will always consider the safety of any children involved and take appropriate safeguarding steps as set out within our [Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#).

4. Domestic abuse does not discriminate

- 4.1. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, disability, race, religion, ethnicity, immigration status or any other characteristic.
- 4.2. We recognise that domestic abuse is gendered. Most victims are women and most of those who cause harm are men. We stand against violence against women and girls in all its forms, including stalking, honour-based abuse and coercive control, as outlined in the UK Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and in line with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) standards.
- 4.3. We also recognise that men experience domestic abuse, and that individuals who are LGBTQIA+, from Black or other minoritised communities, or who have disabilities may face additional barriers in recognising abuse, reporting concerns or accessing support.
- 4.4. We know some groups, experience specific challenges, for example:
 - People from Black and minoritised communities may face language barriers, cultural pressures or concerns linked to immigration status, cultural expectations, or fear of honour-based violence.
 - People with disabilities or caring responsibilities, ex care leavers and ex rough sleepers, may rely on the abuser for care, or face difficulty finding suitable safe alternative housing.
 - LGBTQIA+ people may not recognise their experience as domestic abuse or may worry that services are not for them.
- 4.5. We will respond with understanding and flexibility making reasonable adjustments and offer different ways to communicate based on your individual needs. On request, we can provide translations of documents in different languages and formats including braille and large print.

5. Telling us about domestic abuse

- 5.1. You can tell us you are experiencing domestic abuse in a number of ways. You can call us on [02081680500](tel:02081680500); email us at housingservices@sagehomes.co.uk, contact us through our [website](#) or on the [mysagehomes portal](#), use our live chat or speak to any member of staff. You do not need to contact a specific team first. Anyone in our organisation can receive a disclosure and will know what to do next.
- 5.2. You can also report on behalf of someone else. We will treat what you tell us sensitively and in confidence. We will never share what you have told us with the person causing harm, including where you hold a joint tenancy together.
- 5.3. We understand that telling us about domestic abuse is a significant and often difficult step. We will always respect your pace and will not pressure you into making decisions or acting before you feel ready.
- 5.4. Our approach is survivor centred, meaning we will work with you to understand your wishes, needs and the safest way to support you.
- 5.5. We recognise that domestic abuse can affect a person's ability to remain safely in their home or sustain their tenancy. Where appropriate, we will consider all reasonable housing and tenancy options available to us to help keep victims and survivors safe. Decisions will be based on the individual circumstances of each case, the risks identified and the information available to us. This may include considering changes to tenancy arrangements where this would help to safeguard a victim or survivor.
- 5.6. Where we identify a risk of harm to you, any children, or others, we will take a proportionate, risk-based approach. This may involve sharing information or acting in line with our [Safeguarding Adults](#) and [Safeguarding Children and Young People](#) policies. Where it is safe to do so, we will always explain this to you and keep you informed.

6. How we record your information

- 6.1. When a disclosure is made, we will open a case for you. This is stored separately from your general tenancy record and is kept secure. Only colleagues with the appropriate permissions can access it.
- 6.2. We will explain clearly how your information is used and stored, and what we will and will not share and with whom. There are limited circumstances where we may be required by law to share information without your consent, for example where there is a serious risk of harm to you or others. We will tell you if this applies, unless doing so would put you or others at greater risk.

7. How we will support you

- 7.1. Our Housing Operations Service will support you when Domestic Abuse is identified. We will respond to your initial contact within 1 working day. Once you are connected, you will be given a single point of contact, usually your Homes and Communities Officer or your Community Safety Officer, who will work with you throughout.

- 7.2. There is no limit to the number of times you can access our domestic abuse service. This includes if you have resumed a relationship with the same person. We will always be led by you and will only contact you in a way we have agreed is safe.
- 7.3. Depending on your situation, we can:
- complete a risk assessment with you to understand the level of risk you are facing
 - create a safety plan with you so you know what to do if you need to leave quickly
 - make your home more secure
 - make referrals to specialist support services for you and your children
 - provide additional support for example if there are rent arrears or you want to move home
 - give you information and advice about your housing and tenancy options if you hold a joint tenancy, including where domestic abuse affects your ability to remain safely in your home
 - support you to stay in your home if that is what you want and it is safe to do so
 - give you advice about how to move, including in an emergency or temporarily, if you need to leave your home
 - give you information about Clare's Law, which allows you to ask the police if someone you are with has a history of domestic abuse
- 7.4. If the reported Domestic Abuse is being experienced at the time of reporting, we will carry out all the actions above including a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based violence) risk assessment to determine if we need to alert multi agency report. In most cases, other agencies are already involved. We will ensure we work closely with those agencies to progress any actions.
- 7.5. If you move into one of our homes after leaving an abusive relationship, we will talk through what support you need and make sure you can access it.
- 7.6. Before we close your case, we will ask if you would like to give us feedback. This helps us improve our service for others.

8. Equality and diversity

- 8.1. Sage is committed to making sure all services are accessible to all our customers. Our staff will be trained to make sure they are communicating appropriately with our customers, and they have the relevant information.
- 8.2. We recognise that people's needs and circumstances differ. We will take time to understand yours, including any protected characteristics and whether you are a customer with diverse needs. We can offer different ways to communicate with us and will make reasonable adjustments where needed.
- 8.3. 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 protected characteristic defined within the Equality Act 2010.

- 8.4. On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print.

9. Working with other organisations

- 9.1. We will build and maintain strong relationships with specialist domestic abuse services in the areas where we work. We will understand what is available locally and refer you to services best suited to your needs and the risks you face.
- 9.2. We will also work with the police, local authorities, social services and suitable voluntary support agencies or other services to make sure you receive a joined-up response. We understand that working with several organisations at once can feel overwhelming. Our colleagues will help you navigate this.
- 9.3. We have information-sharing agreements in place so that other organisations can tell us if they are working with one of our customers who may need housing support. We will also obtain consent from customers where needed.
- 9.4. In cases where the risk of serious harm is high, we will make a referral to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This brings together the police, health, social care and other services to coordinate a response and keep you safer.

10. People who cause harm

- 10.1. We do not tolerate domestic abuse in our homes. Our tenancy agreements make this clear, and breaching this condition may result in tenancy action.
- 10.2. We can hold those who cause harm to account while always being led by the wishes, safety and needs of the victim or survivor when deciding what action to take. Where appropriate and proportionate, we may take tenancy action against those responsible for domestic abuse, in addition to working with partner agencies and specialist services.

This may include:

- supporting you to report the abuse to the police so they can investigate and take action
 - signposting or referring you to specialist services who can help put legal protections in place, such as non-molestation or occupation orders
 - providing information about the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) if you have concerns about someone you are in a relationship with.
- 10.3. We are clear about our role as a landlord and take a survivor centred, multi-agency approach to domestic abuse. Where specialist legal protections or enforcement measures are required, we work closely with the police and local authorities and signpost or refer appropriately to the agencies best placed to apply these powers. This ensures clear accountability, coordinated risk management and effective safeguarding to support customers to feel safe in their homes.

- 10.4. We will not expect victims or survivors to pursue legal action or obtain a court order before we consider what support or housing options may be available to them. We will work with the information available to us and take a proportionate, risk-informed approach to decision making.
- 10.5. Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, we will consider options that allow victims and survivors to remain safely in their home without being disadvantaged by the actions of the person causing harm.
- 10.6. Where it is safe to do so, and where a perpetrator is willing to engage, we will also signpost them to support and rehabilitation services to reduce the risk of further harm.

11. Our staff

Training

- 11.1 All customer-facing staff receive safeguarding training with and domestic abuse learning appropriate to their role. Our specialist domestic abuse team are trained to carry out risk assessments and create safety plans.
- 11.2 We will keep our training current and make sure staff are aware of changes in legislation, guidance and best practice.

Staff experiencing domestic abuse

- 11.3 We recognise that domestic abuse can affect anyone, including members of our own team. Our approach to supporting staff is set out in our staff safeguarding and wellbeing procedure.

12. Raising awareness

- 12.1 We will raise awareness of domestic abuse through training, campaigns and resources for our customers and our staff. We will make sure our customers know how to get support from us and from specialist services.
- 12.2 Information about how to report domestic abuse and access support is available on our website at www.sagehomes.co.uk [Domestic abuse | Sage Homes](#) and through the [mysagehomes portal](#).

13 How we measure our performance

- 13.1 We will track and review the following to make sure we deliver this policy effectively:
 - the number of domestic abuse disclosures and cases
 - feedback from customers and specialist domestic abuse services
 - case file audits and quality reviews
 - outcomes from complaints, ombudsman enquiries, and domestic homicide reviews
- 13.2 We will use this information to continuously improve our service.

14 Related policies

14.1 This policy should be read alongside:

- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Management Transfer Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young Person
- Assignment of Tenancy Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Lettings and Allocations Policy
- Hate Crime Policy
- Equality and Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection Policy

15 Policy review

15.1 We will review this policy at least once every three years unless:

- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, making sure that it continues to meet our aims and industry best practice
- We identify any problems or failures in this policy 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	Date of Review
2.5	Community Safety Manager	Previous version	Customer & People Committee	Nov 2024	Nov 2027
3.0	Head of Resident Services	Full strategic review. Rewritten to align with DAHA and RSH Consumer standards.	Customer Scrutiny Panel / Leadership Team / Customer & Assets Committee	Jul 2026	Jul 2029