
DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Saffron Group (referred to hereafter as 'Saffron') believes that none of its tenants should live in fear of abuse from a current or former spouse, partner or civil partner, or other member of their household including carers, and will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with violence. Such abuse may be physical, emotional, financial, sexual or psychological and the policy is intended to cover all such instances. Saffron has signed up to the "Make A Stand" campaign.

Where domestic abuse is suspected in relation to a child or someone with special needs a referral will be made to the appropriate agency. Saffron has a linked but separate Safeguarding Children Policy.

We define domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse,
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking,
- Online or digital abuse

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Policy is designed to set out Saffron's position and approach to domestic abuse.

2. POLICY

- 2.1 Saffron aims to offer assistance to any of its tenants who are suffering from domestic abuse or threats of violence either from someone within their own home, or from someone outside their home (such as a boyfriend/girlfriend, family member or former civil partner or partner). This Policy is also closely linked to Saffron's Anti- Social Behaviour Policy. In cases of Domestic Abuse Saffron will not normally be the lead agency as the Police are the most appropriate body to take action where there is violence or fear of violence and the local authority will have ultimate responsibility for homelessness within their area.

- 2.2 Wherever possible, Saffron will endeavour to assist those threatened with or suffering abuse by helping to provide them with secure accommodation, free from the threat or fear of abuse. Where Saffron is not in a position to offer such assistance, it will provide support to the victims and sign post to organisations who can help with alternative sources of accommodation and support, including assistance from voluntary organisations.
- 2.3 Saffron will take a 'victim-centered' approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse. Recognising that evidence of violence may not always be readily available, Saffron will accept the victim's account and will not insist on the victim providing proof of abuse. Saffron will also be guided by the victim in determining an appropriate course of action in response to an incident of domestic abuse.
- 2.4 Saffron may take action to evict the perpetrators of domestic abuse using the powers available to it under the Housing Act 1996 (Ground 14a), subject to the wishes of the victim and/or to consider injunctive action under Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Housing Act 1996 or other relevant legislation.
- 2.5 Saffron will take a flexible approach in responding to incidents of domestic abuse, to take account of the varying circumstances of victims of abuse and the different courses of action which may be possible and appropriate.
- 2.6 Saffron will work with local authorities in whose areas it operates, and other local agencies to develop appropriate strategies for responding to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.

3. APPROACH

- 3.1 All victims of domestic abuse will be interviewed by an appropriate member of staff within one working day of asking for assistance.
- 3.2 The victim will be offered the facility of an interview with a staff member of the same sex. Where it is necessary to use an interpreter, he or she should also be of the same sex as the victim if the victim requests this.
- 3.3 Interviews will be carried out in a sympathetic and supportive manner. The victim will be assured of confidentiality. The victim will be advised of possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with the longer term.
- 3.4 If the victim is unable to return home, the member of staff will liaise with the appropriate local authority regarding the provision of temporary accommodation, subject to the wishes of the victim.
- 3.5 Where the victim has left the accommodation, and subject to his or her wishes, Saffron will consider taking action to evict the perpetrator of the abuse using its powers under the Housing Act 1996 (Ground 14a) and through the tenancy

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agreement. Saffron will also discuss with the victim options including giving notice to end the tenancy and transfer of the tenancy through assignment or via a Court Order.

- 3.6 If the victim is able to remain in his or her home temporarily, Saffron will discuss options for transfer through the Home Options or other lettings schemes including direct lets and managed move.
- 3.7 If the victim feels able to remain in his or her home either temporarily or permanently, Saffron will consider additional security measures, at the request of the Police and/or Domestic Abuse support agencies. This could include lock changes, additional security lighting, chains or bolts on doors etc. These will usually be at no cost to the tenant. ‘
- 3.8 Saffron will develop close working relationships with specialist agencies to offer advice, counselling and support. Saffron participate in *Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences* (MARAC) and are able to refer to have cases heard at MARAC.
- 3.9 Saffron recognises that there may be circumstances where it will need and/or wish to take different or alternative action to that outlined in this procedure and it reserves the right to do so.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1 The Assistant Director (Housing Operations) will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and will ensure that all relevant staff receive appropriate training in relation to Domestic Abuse.

5. POLICY REVIEW

- 5.1 Saffron will review this Policy at least every 3 years

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