

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 This policy applies to all Saffron residents and outlines how we will tackle domestic abuse whether that be offering support and guidance to victims/ survivors or dealing with perpetrators. By residents we mean, tenants leaseholders, licensees and shared owners

1.2 We have a separate Staff Domestic Abuse Policy for employees experiencing domestic abuse.

1.3 We recognise that whilst men and women both experience domestic abuse and require access to support, women are disproportionately more likely to experience domestic abuse compared to men.

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Within the Domestic Abuse Act and this policy, domestic abuse is defined as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

This definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Within this definition, economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to do.

- Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or
- Obtain goods or services

It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. Personally connected is defined in the act as people who:

- Are married to each other
- Are civil partners of each other
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement is still in place)
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether the agreement is still in place)
- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- Are relatives
- Children aged under 18 are also recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator

If a resident tells us about abuse in other circumstances, such as abuse by a carer we will consider this under our Safeguarding Policy.

Domestic Abuse and The Law

2.1 Many forms of abuse are a crime, such as, harassment, assault, criminal damage, attempted murder, rape, false imprisonment, threats to kill and more recently, controlling and coercive behaviour and so called ‘revenge porn’.

2.2 Not all Domestic Abuse is criminal, but there is recourse through civil law, via injunctions and non-molestation orders, for example.

3. PURPOSE

3.1 This policy aims to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of domestic abuse amongst our residents, staff, contractors and within Saffron’s communities
- Improve the safety and welfare of adults and children who are affected
- Improve Saffron’s response to domestic abuse
- Offer assistance to residents, regardless of their background
- Hold perpetrators of abuse to account for their actions
- Encourage and maintain multi-agency working to ensure a seamless service to victims/ survivors and their children and families
- Ensure that staff have regular training relevant to their roles and that good practice is shared with staff and customers as part of ongoing learning
- Update processes to fall in line with any new legislation
- Monitor and review domestic abuse cases to ensure good practice is followed and positive outcomes are achieved.

4. POLICY

4.1 This Policy is 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 act where there is violence or fear of violence and the local authority will have ultimate responsibility for homelessness within their area.

4.2 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 signpost to organisations who can help with alternative sources of accommodation and support, including assistance from voluntary organisations.

4.3 Saffron will take a 'victim-centred' 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.

4.4 Saffron will use a full range of remedies as appropriate, considering the needs of each individual case. We will advise about possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with it longer term. We won't pressure victims to take legal action but will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. This may include helping the victim by getting legal advice about a non-molestation order, or possession proceedings.

4.5 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

4.6 A significant number of adults or children who experience domestic abuse will require safeguarding. Employees are trained to be aware of this and to make safeguarding referrals as needed to make sure people are protected. Saffron has a linked but separate Safeguarding policy.

Domestic Abuse and Rehousing

4.7 The Local authority assist victims/ survivors of domestic abuse by awarding a priority need for rehousing through their Allocations Policy and will also take a homeless application from anyone suffering Domestic Abuse who is considered at

risk in their home. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a homeless or threatened with homeless applicant who has experienced Domestic Abuse will be in priority need under the homelessness legislation.

Alternative temporary accommodation will be made available through the Local Authority when needed to keep the applicant or their family members safe.

Victims / survivors can approach any Local authority for assistance without the need for a local connection if it is unsafe for the applicant or household member to remain in their home area. In these circumstances, under homelessness legislation, they will not be referred to an area where they or a member of their household would be at risk of harm.

If the victim can remain in their home temporarily, Saffron will discuss options for transfer through the Home Options or other lettings schemes including mutual exchange, direct lets and managed moves may be considered on a case by case basis.

Working in Partnership

4.8 Saffron will maintain strong partnership working work with local authorities in whose areas it operates, and other local specialist agencies to develop appropriate strategies for responding to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.

We will refer all High Risk Cases into *Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences* (MARAC) and Domestic Abuse perpetrator Partnership Approach (DAPPA) and support action plans to increase the safety of victims.

A significant number of adults or children who experience domestic abuse will also require safeguarding. Employees are aware of this and trained to make safeguarding referrals as needed to ensure people are protected.

We will refer victims to relevant agencies for support including financial, emotional wellbeing, legal advice and housing related matters as appropriate.

We will work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

Awareness of domestic abuse

4.9 We will publicise information to raise awareness about domestic abuse, telling our residents how to get help if they need it, and the type of response, they can expect from us.

We will provide information about the support we provide around domestic abuse when tenants move into their homes.

We will support national campaigns to increase awareness.

We will carry out a programme of employee training to make sure our employees are aware how to spot signs of domestic abuse when working in homes or having conversations with victims. They are aware of how to act and report any concerns confidently and sensitively, such as through our Whistleblowing Policy

5. APPROACH

5.1 All victims of domestic abuse will be interviewed by a trained member of staff within one working day of asking for assistance.

5.2 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 We will carry out a risk assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist, which is a UK wide accredited form used by us and partner organisations to plan how we will support the survivor and any children.

5.5 We will consider additional issues around joint tenancies, including restricting access to tenancy, assignment of tenancy, and ending tenancy if the victim has had to leave their home and the perpetrator remains.

5.6 Where property damage has been caused by a perpetrator, recharges against the victim/ survivor which are as a result of Domestic Abuse will be written off and the perpetrator charged.

5.7 We will provide assistance to victims / survivors regardless of the level of risk, understanding the importance of preventative work.

5.8 Where the victim is unable to return home, a member of staff will liaise with the appropriate local authority regarding the provision of temporary accommodation, subject to the wishes of the victim. We will support the victim to get advice on the best course of action for them and their family.

5.9 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 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.

5.10 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.

5.11 We will keep all cases involving domestic abuse under review until the victim is satisfied, they no longer require support. We will offer support for victims their families and witnesses to make sure they feel safe in their home and community in which they live.

5.12 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.

6. EQUALITIES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

6.1 Saffron is committed to respecting diversity in all aspects of its work and does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

6.2 We will make sure our services are accessible and inclusive. This includes providing a variety of ways to report domestic abuse and arranging interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed. This is to make sure that we do not create additional barriers and that everyone can access our service in the way they need.

6.3 We recognise that victims' experiences of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background, for example, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnic group, or immigration status. We will recognise this intersectionality and understand that certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We will consider the individual needs of each victim when tailoring our approach.

6.4 We will train employees to understand how domestic abuse differently affects individuals and work in partnership with specialist providers to act and make sure victims get the right support. We will partner with and support local organisations with all relevant experience and understanding to better support victims' needs.

7. DATA PROTECTION

7.1 Any data shared by Saffron will be done in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and requirements of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations).

7.2 We respect customers right to privacy and will act in line with our Data Protection Policy. We will never force anyone to share any information they don't want to with us. We will only share information with the victim's permission, unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of children, or a vulnerable adult and it is a duty of care. An individual's information may be shared if it is necessary to prevent or reduce the risk of serious harm to themselves or others.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Safeguarding vulnerable residents Policy
- Staff Domestic Abuse Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Arrears Policy
- Recharge Policy

This policy supports the following legislation:

- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996

9. RESPONSIBILITY

9.1 The Assistant Director 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.

10. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

10.1 We will continuously monitor instances of domestic abuse and evaluate our practices. This will be achieved via regular case reviews and case audits.

10.2 We value the views of our customers and ask for feedback about the service we provide. We will listen to feedback and use it to improve the way in which we work when dealing with domestic abuse.

10.3 We will review the policy every 3 years, or in line with relevant changes to legislation, and in consultation with our Tenant Group.

Consulted with Tenant Scrutiny Group	February 2024
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