



PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES

Domestic Abuse policy

Version:	Last updated - September 2021
Lead Directorate:	Homes and Neighbourhoods
EIA completed:	July 2016
Approved by:	Customer Focus Committee, July 2016

1. Introduction

This policy sets out how Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) will take steps to assist and support any resident experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a largely hidden crime and measuring its true scale can be difficult. It happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.

PCH believes that domestic abuse is unacceptable under any circumstances and that all residents, their families, other occupants of their home and visitors to their home have a right to live their lives without fear of domestic abuse.

This policy sets out our commitment and approach to:

- Identifying incidents of domestic abuse.
- Assisting and supporting victims of domestic abuse.
- Working to prevent incidents of domestic abuse.
- Taking appropriate action to tackle perpetrators living in our accommodation.

We are committed to providing homes where residents want to live and that are safe and secure. Domestic abuse incidents have a serious and devastating impact on an individual's sense of security, health and wellbeing.

We will take a zero-tolerance approach to dealing with domestic abuse and treat all reports with the utmost seriousness.

2. Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the legal definition of domestic abuse. A summary of the definition is:

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,
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse,

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

The full definition can be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

Abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological and emotional: can include creating isolation by not allowing people to see other people or go anywhere on their own, use of threats, or humiliating and undermining behaviour in front of others.
- Controlling behaviour: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- Coercive behaviour: an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. Coercive behaviour can include forced marriage and so called 'honour violence'.
- Physical: can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pushing and shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, murder.
- Sexual: can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a survivor to take part in unwanted sexual acts, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.
- Economic and financial: can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name or allowing no say in how monies are spent.

3. Policy statement

The aims of this policy are that we will:

- Assist and support victims of domestic abuse to access appropriate services as early as possible, to take action and to make choices about what they wish to do.
- Give residents the confidence to report domestic abuse in different ways, including in person, in writing, by telephone, online or via a third party such as an advocate, friend or police officer.
- Prevent domestic abuse by providing a clear message through our tenancy agreement, joint working and awareness raising with residents and their communities.
- Identify signs of domestic abuse, both at the start of a tenancy and during the ongoing occupation of our homes and assist and support victims to take appropriate action.
- Be sensitive to the diverse needs of victims and children considering all protected characteristics, including their age, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.
- Train staff so that they are equipped to identify incidents of domestic abuse and to assist and support victims.
- Ensure victims know that they can meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue.
- Ensure we treat all matters relating to domestic abuse with appropriate sensitivity, consistency, confidentiality and timeliness.
- Continue to provide support to victims over whatever period it is required, even if this proves to be an extended timescale.
- Enable victims to remain in their own homes through provision of advice, support and security measures, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Support survivors to find alternative accommodation if it is not safe for them to stay in their own home.
- Work with partners and support multi agency and partnership working including Plymouth Domestic Abuse Partnership and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), and attend meetings as required.
- Respond to matters of domestic abuse within the context of principles relating to adult and child safeguarding.
- Take firm action against perpetrators of domestic abuse living in our homes, without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing abuse and take tenancy and legal action where appropriate.
- Refer perpetrators into appropriate support services for them where appropriate, for example perpetrator/behaviour change programmes.
- Comply with relevant guidance.
- Recognise socio-economic factors which may impact on those experiencing domestic abuse, such as low income, low literacy or numeracy skills, isolation or caring status.
- Publicise our approach and raise awareness amongst staff and residents.

4. Procedures

We have a procedure to support this policy which sets out how we respond to allegations or incidents of domestic abuse.

5. Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice, current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies.

6. Data protection

In applying this policy, all members of staff must comply with PCH's data protection policy and ensure that personal information supplied by customers is protected at all times.

7. Equality and diversity

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

We will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request. We will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.