

Appendix 2

Domestic Abuse

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At Twenty11 we do not tolerate any form of domestic abuse. Violence in relationships is an abuse of power as well as likely to be a criminal offence. We believe that all our customers have the right to feel and to be safe at home. This appendix sets out how we will take steps to assist and support any of our customers who are suffering from or threatened with domestic violence or abuse.
- 1.2 We are committed to working with our staff, customers, the community and partners to prevent such abuse occurring, to encourage reporting of incidents and to take strong action when this activity takes place.
- 1.3 We recognise that domestic abuse is widespread and traditionally under-reported, that it is rarely a one-off incident, and that victims of such behaviour are not confined to one gender, background, sexuality or ethnic group. Recent statistics (February 2017) state that one in four women and one in six men experience domestic abuse during their lifetime. In 2015/16, 28 men died at the hands of their partner/ex-partner and 77 women.
- 1.4 Domestic abuse is a form of anti-social behaviour. This appendix should therefore be read in conjunction with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which sets out our overall framework for dealing with this behaviour.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 The definition of domestic violence and abuse as used by the government states:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional’

See link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse#domestic-violence-and-abuse-new-definition>

- 2.2 Controlling behaviour is defined as:

'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.'

2.3 Coercive behaviour is defined as:

'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.'

2.4 The above definitions include so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Trafficking is abuse as well.

3.0 Examples of Domestic Abuse

3.1 Examples of Physical Abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, murder.

3.2 Examples of Sexual Abuse can include: rape and coerced sex, forcing someone to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception.

3.3 Examples of Financial Abuse can include: controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how funds are spent, refusing to allow them to earn money or to go to work.

3.4 Examples of Psychological and Emotional Violence and Abuse can include:

- Creating isolation e.g. not allowing them to see other people, preventing them from making their own friendships, not allowing them to go anywhere on their own, causing them to be depressed and then using this against them;
- Use of threats e.g. to kill their family, children, friends, pets; to throw them out and keep the children; to find them if they ever leave; to have them locked up; to tell everyone they are mad;
- Putting them down, humiliating and undermining them in front of others or in front of their children; telling them they are stupid, hopeless, unlovable, that no one would believe them, or that they are a bad parent;
- Making false allegations such as telling others that the victim is the one committing the domestic abuse when it is the other way round.

This category can also include abuse from 'stalkers' who will often use multiple and differing methods to harass their victims.

3.5 Examples of digital and social media abuse (often this can be from former partners):

- stalking someone online
- placing false and malicious information about someone on their or others' social media
- being trolled
- having no control on your content or not allowed to have access
- revenge pornography
- monitoring or controlling e-mail and phone calls (including work email and calls)

4.0 Our Approach

- 4.1 We will provide a victim centred approach, with the individual's safety and that of their children being our primary concern.
- 4.2 We will ensure that those experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate services as early as possible and are given advice to allow them to make choices about what to do next. We will support victims by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- 4.3 We recognise that incidents of domestic abuse are extremely sensitive incidents for victims to report and will ensure confidentiality where possible on any cases that are reported. We will encourage victims to allow us to share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, so we can deal with cases more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the victim and/or their dependants to provide better or more effective support. We may - in exceptional circumstances - pass information to external agencies without prior consent if a child is considered at risk or if there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone in the situation described.
- 4.4 We will, where appropriate, agree an action plan with the victim, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them.
- 4.5 If needed, we will consider providing improved security to a victim's home e.g. security lights, window locks.
- 4.6 We will support staff who are dealing with this type of case by giving them the opportunity to have regular de-briefs with their line manager as well as at their

one to one's, plus all our staff have access to our Employee Assistance Scheme, which offers confidential life management and personal support services.

5.0 Re-housing

5.1 Where possible and appropriate, we will assist and support the victim to remain in their home, which could include a referral to an appropriate support agency. In some cases, the victim may be unable to return to their home either in the immediate or the long term, for example if the perpetrator remains in the property or in the locality of the property.

5.2 We have no provision for emergency and temporary housing. If the victim cannot return home and has nowhere else to stay, advice will be offered regarding options for re-housing.

5.3 Consideration may be given to a request for a 'priority move' for a victim of domestic abuse if it is deemed necessary and supported by other agencies e.g. the police. This also applies to those who witness such behaviour and who provide evidence regarding this crime and may therefore also be at risk. Where the victim is a joint tenant, a priority move cannot occur if the remaining tenant will continue to reside at the property. In this instance, the victim may need advice about alternative housing options such as through Wycombe District Council and independent legal advice.

6.0 Multi-agency working

6.1 We are part of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) at which information is shared between agencies involved in domestic abuse cases and multi-agency action plans are developed in response to high risk cases. Information sharing is strictly limited to the aims of the meeting and is directly relevant to the safety of the victim, thus meeting the legal basis for sharing information within section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act in order to prevent crime.

6.2 We will also refer customers to other support agencies, including Wycombe Women's Aid, a registered charity working in the Wycombe, South Bucks and Chiltern District. They provide support to women and children experiencing the effects of domestic violence by offering safe, temporary and emergency accommodation as well as practical and emotional support within the refuge and through outreach services in the local community. There are also charities who can offer advice and safe housing to men who are victims of domestic abuse, such as ManKind Initiative.

7.0 Action against the perpetrator

7.1 Our tenancy agreements contain clauses that state domestic abuse is unacceptable. If a tenant has been violent towards a partner or members of the household or their visitors, this is considered as 'red line' behavior (see Tenancy Policy for details). Should domestic abuse occur and be substantiated, it would therefore be a breach of our agreement and we would take action to end or not renew the tenancy. The relevant extract from our tenancy agreement is as follows:

"That you, your visitors or any person who lives with you will not threaten or abuse or commit any act of violence against:

- any other person living in your home, including a joint tenant; and/or
- any current or former partners; and/or
- their friends and/or family;

in your home and/or the Building and/or on the Estate.

This includes (but is not limited to) coercive control, psychological or emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, financial abuse, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse."

7.2 A tenant or one joint tenant cannot end a fixed term tenancy by a notice to quit. They can surrender but both joint tenants must agree to a surrender (so there cannot be a unilateral ending of the joint tenancy by one joint tenant alone). Should domestic abuse occur where there is a joint fixed term tenancy, we may therefore take action to end the tenancy and then re-grant as a sole tenancy. In addition, our Tenancy Agreement states:

"If any member of your household has left because of violence or threats of violence towards them or a member of their family who was living with them, and we are satisfied that the person who has left is unlikely to return, we may take action to regain possession of your home or exclude the perpetrator from the home."

7.3 Injunctions against the perpetrator can also be sought by either us as the landlord or by the victim. In cases of domestic abuse, an injunction would normally involve the perpetrator being forbidden to come into the locality of the victim's home or to make contact with the victim.

7.4 A coercive or controlling behaviour offence came into force in December 2015. It carries a maximum 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both. Victims who experience coercive and controlling behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse, can now take action against their perpetrators.

- 7.5 If someone has suffered or been threatened with domestic abuse, the police can issue a Domestic Violence Protection Notice and then apply to the magistrates' court for a Domestic Violence Protection Order. A Domestic Violence Protection Order can protect someone from further abuse, and if they live with the perpetrator, ban them from returning to the home. If the perpetrator does not keep to the Order, they can be arrested and brought before the court. A Domestic Violence Protection Order lasts for up to 28 days and gives the victim time to explore options and get further support.