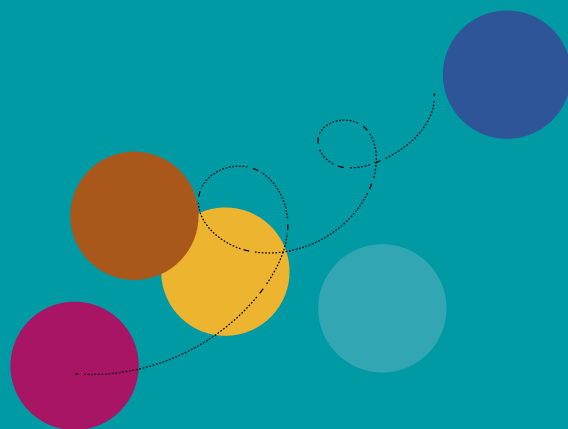




NORWICH
City Council



Supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse September 2026



Policy

Title: Supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse

Owner: Davina Howes

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Version control

Date	Version number	Reason	Author
22 September 2026	1.1	Policy review	Rachel Omori

1. Introduction

1.1 Norwich City Council is committed to supporting residents who are experiencing domestic abuse. We will respond sensitively and treat people without judgement.

1.2 This policy explains the service we aim to provide. Our priorities are to increase safety and protect housing security.

1.3 The policy has been developed with input from people affected by domestic abuse and we are very grateful for their insight and input.

1.4 Note on language: This policy uses different terms, including victim, survivor, victim-survivor and people experiencing domestic abuse. This is to recognise that people may be at different stages of their journey and reflects how they may view themselves.

1.5 We know it can be difficult to ask for help and are mindful we may be the first point of contact for disclosure. We will provide safe and private ways for people to disclose abuse wherever possible, including in person, by telephone, online or through arranged appointments.

1.6 We will treat all disclosures sensitively and confidentially. If we need to share information for safeguarding reasons, we will explain this clearly. We will support people whether or not they have reported domestic abuse to the police or another agency.

1.7 At all points of contact our intention is to empower people affected by domestic abuse to remain in control of their situation.

1.8 In this policy, domestic abuse means the legal definition in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This includes violence, threats, controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional abuse, psychological abuse and economic abuse.

1.9 The council works within Norfolk County Council's Adult Safeguarding policy guidelines and procedures. More information can be read on the Norfolk County Council website.

[Policy and procedures | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board](#) / [Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy | NSCP](#)

1.10 This Domestic Abuse Policy should be read in conjunction with our [Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy](#) which provides an overarching approach to the council's response to all safeguarding matters. In addition, the housing department's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy are related policies. How we respond to domestic abuse is set out within these documents.

1.11 The council also has a policy for staff members who may be experiencing domestic abuse, which can be found by staff on our intranet.

2. What is domestic abuse?

2.1 Relevant legislation

The following legislation is relevant to this policy:

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Civil Partnership Act (2004)
- Crime and Security Act (2010)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act (2004)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Family Law Act (1996)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003)
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007)
- Homelessness Act (2002)
- Housing Act (1996)
- Protection from Harassment Act (1997)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Clare's Law (2017)

2.2 Statutory definition of domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- the behaviour is abusive
- Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:
 - physical or sexual abuse
 - violent or threatening behaviour
 - controlling or coercive behaviour
 - economic abuse (see subsection (4))
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to:
 - acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - obtain goods or services
- For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).
- References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

2.3 Who can experience domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Domestic abuse can manifest itself in specific ways within different communities.

2.4 In police recorded crime and Crime Survey of England and Wales data, women are more often recorded as victims of domestic abuse, and men are more often recorded as perpetrators. Female victims are also more likely to be identified as high-risk or repeat victims.

2.5 Many men also experience domestic abuse. They can face serious harm and may find it harder to ask for help because of stigma or assumptions about who experiences domestic abuse.

2.6 It is important to remember the experiences of children and young people who are living with domestic abuse. Witnessing domestic abuse is one of ten Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act identifies children as victims of

domestic abuse if they see, hear, or otherwise experience domestic abuse between two people where the child is related to at least one of them. Their safety and wellbeing must be considered in any decisions about support for the adults involved.

2.7 As part of our responsibility to safeguard children, Norwich City Council has made a [Flourish Pledge](#) to prioritise the safety and welfare of children and young people whenever we are aware of domestic abuse and work closely with other agencies enabling children to access early support.

2.8 Definition of “personally connected” – Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies:

- they are, or have been, married to each other
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
- they are relatives

For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

- the person is a parent of the child, or
- the person has parental responsibility for the child

You can find the full definition at legislation.gov.uk

2.9 Honour based abuse is a form of domestic abuse. There is currently no statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse in England and Wales, but a common definition has been adopted across government and criminal justice agencies:

‘A crime or incident which has, or may have been, committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and / or community’.

3. Support

3.1 We will treat all reports of domestic abuse with respect, empathy and listen to the person’s needs and wishes when agreeing what action to take. By working collaboratively

with survivors of abuse, housing professionals/services, will empower survivors to make informed choices and take back control over their lives.

3.2 Staff will take a believing, non-judgemental and needs-led approach. We recognise that survivors are experts in their own lives and understand what they need to feel safe and secure.

3.3 We take a person-centred approach to those experiencing domestic abuse and make the safety, dignity and well-being of the person the priority.

3.4 All reports of domestic abuse will be responded to in accordance with Norwich City Council's Adult Safeguarding policy guidelines and procedures, our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and our Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy.

3.5 Each case is different; we will always place an individual's needs at the forefront of any support we provide. This will include (but not be limited to), physical needs, mental and emotional needs, communication needs and each of the nine characteristics of the Equality Act (2010).

3.6 We can refer people to other agencies that provide specialist support and guidance.

3.7 Domestic abuse is a crime. We will encourage people to report it to the police if they feel able to do so. In an emergency, always call 999.

3.8 We recognise that reporting domestic abuse to the police can be difficult and will provide housing advice and support regardless of whether the police have been informed.

3.9 We are part of the 'Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board', which consists of other key agencies in the area to offer support, services and information to survivors of domestic abuse.

4. Multi-agency working

4.1 We work with local and countywide partners to make the response to domestic abuse and sexual violence as joined up as possible. Norwich City Council is a member of the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership's (NCCSP), Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group (DASVG), the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) and the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) and has collaborated to create a joined-up strategy, responding to [Domestic abuse and sexual violence and abuse](#).

4.2 Norfolk partners have developed a Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy. This is based on an assessment of accommodation and support needs and is reviewed regularly.

4.3 We recognise that no single organisation will have a complete picture of the life of a family or individual living with domestic abuse but may have insights that are crucial to

their support and safety. We recognise the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and to contribute to an effective Co-ordinated Community Response. Examples of other partners include (but are not limited to):

- The police
- Health providers
- Specialist domestic abuse support agencies
- Independent Domestic-Based Violence Advocates (IDVAs)
- Legal advisory services
- Victim support services
- Education
- Social Care
- Learning Disabilities Partnership (LDP)
- Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer(s) (Where required)
- Other housing partners

(Further details about information sharing and consent is provided in Section 5).

4.4 Some staff receive enhanced training and act as Domestic Abuse Champions. They are available to offer support and advice to colleagues in relation to good practice. Their role is also to raise awareness of domestic abuse and ensure staff know how to access support.

4.5 Staff from our housing, communities and environmental health teams also attend multi-agency working groups and panels on a regular basis and share information internally between teams. Partnership groups include:

- Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board
- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
- The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group (DASVG)
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Senior Management Board
- Domestic Abuse Partnership Perpetrator Approach (DAPPA)
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Related Death reviews (DARDR's – formerly known as Domestic Homicide Reviews)
- Norfolk Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Problem Solving Group-Adults

4.6 Staff also take advantage of opportunities to participate in regional and national discussion forums through attendance at Regional Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance events and through participation in the National Housing Federation's Domestic Abuse core group.

5. Information sharing and consent

5.1 We will only share information with other agencies with the consent of the person experiencing domestic abuse unless there is a legal or safeguarding reason to share it without consent. This may include:

- The information is required for the protection of children.
- We are required by law to share the information.
- There are legal reasons to protect a person without capacity.

5.2 Any decisions made by professionals that affect the person experiencing domestic abuse should be proportionate and take into account their wishes (where known) as closely as possible. However, any wishes of the individual cannot undermine the council's legal duty to act.

6. Housing options

6.1 The council's priorities are to support people experiencing domestic abuse to stay safe and to protect their housing security. Staff will provide advice and support to help people experiencing domestic abuse to consider safe housing options. This may include staying safely in their home or relocating.

6.2 Advice is available for all Norwich residents regardless of whether the person owns or rents their home. [Help for homeless people](#) / [Domestic abuse and violence](#)

6.3 The council have legal duties to prevent and relieve homelessness and will offer advice and support based on individual circumstances.

6.4 Housing Advice staff receive domestic abuse awareness training and are able to complete Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment, (DASH) risk assessments.

6.5 There is an extremely high demand for housing in Norwich and what we can offer will depend on what is available and suitable to meet the person's needs at the time.

6.6 Safety will be prioritised while also ensuring that the wishes, feelings and needs of household members are appropriately considered.

6.7 Staff will speak separately with victims and alleged perpetrators. They will offer advice and support to assist those experiencing domestic abuse to reduce risk and remain safe.

This may include:

- Referral to a specialist domestic abuse advisor
- Help to stay safely in the home and installation of additional security measures via the council's sanctuary scheme

- Help finding safe emergency accommodation or refuge
- A personal housing plan
- Support to access other services to support the wellbeing and welfare needs of the household occupants.
- Advice on other legal remedies

6.8 In all cases the council will follow its usual Home Options, homelessness prevention and relief processes.

6.9 Where possible we will support people at risk of domestic abuse to avoid homelessness and remain safe within their home.

6.10 If staying is not viable, we will work with the person to consider a range of options and explain what support is available to access them.

6.11 If the location of the property is the issue and the risks cannot be reduced, a move to a different area may be appropriate. In this situation, victims would be assessed in accordance with legislation and policy and assisted to support a move as quickly as possible. In such circumstances the victim would receive only one property offer in an area in which they are assessed as being safe from risk. If people experiencing domestic abuse wish to move within Norwich, the usual Home Options and allocations processes apply and applicants will be banded according to need.

6.12 Whether Home Options banding is an appropriate and safe solution will depend on the level of urgency, nature of the risk and whether the victim would be safe in Norwich. This can only be determined after a detailed assessment and interview which would usually be carried out by the council's Domestic Abuse Advisor.

6.13 We recognise that approaching the council for help can be difficult for some people and will provide support at every stage. Where information is requested, we ask residents to:

- Give as much information as possible
- Send documents quickly to avoid delays
- Ask for support with processes whenever needed

6.14 Norwich is a relatively small city and if it is assessed that the victim is unsafe in Norwich they would be referred to make a homelessness application to another local authority area.

6.15 The Housing Options team hold a Safe at Home budget, which may be available to provide additional home security to those wishing to remain in their own home. In addition, other financial support (such as access to Rent Deposit and Spend to Save schemes) may be available to people wishing to relocate.

6.16 We do not generally encourage victims of domestic abuse to carry out a mutual exchange. Our priority is ensuring people access a safe and secure environment and we do not consider that mutual exchanges usually fulfil these criteria. However, each case will be assessed on an individual basis, including consideration of the risks.

6.17 Where appropriate, specialist advice, for example from the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA), Service will be sought.

7. Joint tenancies

7.1 We encourage anyone experiencing domestic abuse who is a joint tenant to contact the council to seek advice at the earliest opportunity. We will support people to access specialist support as required based on their circumstances.

7.2 Where requests are made to add any party as a joint tenant, the council will make all reasonable efforts to assess whether there is coercion and control or any other risk to the tenant from the party wishing to become a joint tenant. The council reserves the right to refuse a joint tenancy request on this basis.

7.3 The council will speak with victims and alleged perpetrators separately and signpost to further support as necessary.

7.4 In situations of domestic abuse between joint tenants, the landlord is unable to remove a person's name from the tenancy without their consent. This means that Housing staff are unable to make a decision to assign the tenancy to either party, although we can offer advice.

7.5 In these circumstances the victim can apply for an occupation order or for a court order to transfer the tenancy into their sole name. We encourage the victim to obtain independent legal advice on how best to proceed.

7.6 If a victim has a secure tenancy (not a fixed-term tenancy, as both tenants are required to give notice on this type); they will also have the option to serve a notice to quit on the property, which will end the tenancy for both parties. If the perpetrator does not vacate the property, the landlord could decide to begin possession proceedings and may then consider using discretion to grant the victim a sole tenancy at an alternative property or the original property.

7.7 In the case of Council Tenants, the council is likely to begin possession proceedings against a perpetrator. However, this decision will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the level of risk involved and will be made in consultation with the victim and other professionals (such as the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service).

7.8 If a victim of domestic abuse loses their secure tenancy as a result of the abuse, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to grant another secure tenancy to the victim if they rehouse them. Granting a sole tenancy to the original property will depend on the person's housing needs and whether it would be considered safe for them to remain there. (Again, these decisions will be made in consultation with the victim and other professionals such as the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service).

7.9 The victim should always seek advice and support to be fully informed of their options to avoid losing their tenancy. We will signpost people to appropriate agencies who can provide independent advice to meet individual circumstances.

8. Taking action

8.1 We have a duty to work within Norfolk County Council Children and Adult Safeguarding policy guidelines and procedures. More information can be read at the Norfolk County Council website. [Domestic abuse - Norfolk County Council](#)

8.2 We can refer victims to access advice on their options and may be able to provide support when taking legal action against the person committing the domestic abuse.

8.3 We can support someone to access civil injunctions where appropriate and the council may use partial or full closure orders to help keep people safe in their homes. [Get an injunction if you've been the victim of domestic abuse: Overview - GOV.UK / Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Explanatory Notes](#)

9. Security

9.1 Where measures to enhance security at a property are identified we will assess the viability of these against the practicalities at the particular address and instruct contractors accordingly. We will always aim to make a property as secure as reasonably possible.

9.2 Where repairs are required to increase security or make a property secure, these will be treated as urgent and completed within 24 hours.

10. Recognising and responding to the risk of suicide

10.1 We recognise that people experiencing domestic abuse may also be at increased risk of self-harm or suicide and will respond with care, dignity, and urgency whenever concerns about suicide risk arise.

10.2 Where there is a suicide risk but no immediate danger we will:

- Work with the person to identify supportive people or services they trust.
- Provide information about specialist domestic abuse and mental health support.
- Agree a plan for ongoing contact and follow up.
- Ensure the person knows they are not alone and that help is available.

10.3 When a resident discloses suicidal thoughts or when staff have reasonable grounds for concern, we will:

- Listen with empathy and without judgement, acknowledging their feelings and allowing the person to speak freely.
- Explain that information may need to be shared to keep them safe.
- Assess immediate safety by sensitively exploring whether they have current thoughts of suicide, a plan, or access to means.
- Seek urgent support from appropriate services if there is immediate risk.
- Follow internal safeguarding procedures as soon as possible.

10.4 The council will work collaboratively with safeguarding partners, domestic abuse services, and mental health professionals to ensure coordinated support and risk management where there is an identified suicide risk.

11. Perpetrator management

11.1 When supporting someone experiencing abuse, we will take account of their wishes and not assume that they wish the matter to be reported to the police, or they want a shared living arrangement to end. If the survivor wishes to remain with the perpetrator, any decisions around support will be based on the specific risks associated with the situation. Housing Advice staff are trained in DASH risk assessments and are also encouraged to refer to the specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service where there are concerns.

11.2 Where it is appropriate for enforcement action to be taken (for example, reporting to the police, action against a tenancy), council staff will do so.

11.3 It is also recognised that, from time to time, Housing Advice and Housing Services staff may be expected to support a perpetrator with their housing options. There is no policy to prevent perpetrators from accessing social housing via the Home Option scheme, although the policy does allow exclusions based on behaviour. Victim safety will always take precedence in any housing decision involving a perpetrator.

11.4 Any decisions to exclude someone will be on a case-by-case basis and informed by the level of risk to all affected parties.

12. Prevention and awareness

12.1 The council is committed to learning from good practice and providing appropriate training for staff. This will include domestic abuse awareness e-learning for all staff, specialist training for key roles and Domestic Abuse Champion roles throughout the organisation.

12.2 We will actively seek to raise awareness of domestic abuse and encourage anyone that is experiencing it to engage with support services.

12.3 We are committed to achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and seek to learn and improve services through the accreditation process.

12.4 We will also raise awareness of the topic through articles published on our website, Tenant and Leaseholder newsletters and magazine and share awareness material on our housing Facebook page and with relevant partners and agencies where and when appropriate.

13. Related documents

- [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Internal Staff Domestic Abuse Policy \(HR\)](#)
- [Home Options Allocation Scheme 2026 | Norwich City Council](#)
- [Tenancy policy 2024 | Norwich City Council](#)
- [Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy](#)
- [Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)
- [Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Procedures](#)
- [Norfolk Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy](#)
- [The Government's Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy](#)
- [Norwich City Council's Community Safety Strategy](#)

14. Equality and diversity

14.1 As a council, we are committed to delivering services that narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community, and to ensuring that protected groups are included and have their voices heard and reduce barriers in accessing services and support.

14.2 The council has reviewed this policy in light of the 2026 Supreme Court ruling and the Equality and Human Rights updated Code of Practice to ensure that support is provided to everyone affected by domestic abuse including trans gender and non-binary residents. The provision of safe accommodation for trans survivors is also being reviewed together with members of the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

14.3 Additional support will be provided as required to ensure that transgender and non-binary residents are able to access the services they need.

14.4 The council will continue to work within the partnership via the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group and with the Diverse Communities IDVA to reach into communities where there are likely to be 'hidden victims' who have their own unique barriers to access Domestic Abuse Support. We are also obliged to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

14.5 We believe that all people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we are determined to ensure that everyone entitled to use our services receives fair and equitable treatment. One way that we can achieve this is by ensuring that those who do not use English as a first language (including users of British Sign Language) still have equal access to our services through the provision of Interpretation and Translation services.

14.6 We are committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

14.7 An equality impact assessment has been carried out for this policy.

15. Complaints

15.1 Any complaints should be addressed in line with the Housing Services [Compliments, complaints and suggestions procedure](#). The responding officer may discuss the complaint with the Domestic Abuse Lead or one of the council's Domestic Abuse Champions to ensure that matters are viewed through an informed domestic abuse lens.

15.2 An overview of the complaints procedure is available here. [Corporate complaints policy](#).

16. Review

16.1 This policy has been reviewed and informed by residents of Norwich who have lived experience of Domestic Abuse.

16.2 This policy and its procedures will be reviewed every two years. However, earlier reassessment may be required if there are changes in operations and /or legislation.



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