

Cornwall Rural Housing Association Domestic Abuse Policy

1. Policy Statement

1.1 In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 this policy sets out Cornwall Rural Housing Association's (CRHA) approach to dealing with domestic abuse. The definition of domestic abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuse. CRHA recognises the damage to children who witness domestic abuse.

1.2 This policy sets out how CRHA will take action to prevent, identify and respond to domestic abuse and the steps to assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with violence or abuse in order to prioritise survivor safety.

1.3 This policy applies to all CRHA customers, non-tenants living in our homes and all colleagues.

1.4 The policy complies with the following legislation:

- Housing Act 1996 (homelessness and allocations duties)
- Equality Act 2010
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Victims and Prisoners Act 2024
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Act 2014 (where safeguarding applies)
- Regulator of Social Housing – Consumer Standards (esp. Tenancy, Neighbourhood & Community, and Safety)

2. Policy

2.1 CRHA recognise the importance of supporting their customers and their family members and will enable residents to report domestic abuse to us in different ways, and we will investigate all reports of domestic abuse that we receive, including those made in confidence, and those made by individuals not directly involved such as neighbours and contractors.

2.2 We will work with those experiencing domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other characteristics identified in the Equality Act and whether the abuse is occurring inside or outside the home or whether it is historic or ongoing abuse.

2.3 CRHA is committed to a survivor centred approach to support and assist respecting their choices wherever possible. We will believe and listen to disclosures, put survivor safety first, avoid victim blaming and allow flexibility in our lettings and allocation policies.

2.4 CRHA will use its tenancy and housing management powers appropriately and proportionately in cases involving domestic abuse, ensuring that survivors are not penalised for rent arrears, property condition issues or breaches of tenancy that arise as a direct result of abuse. Where appropriate, the organisation will consider options such as granting or transferring a sole tenancy in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and relevant housing legislation. Enforcement action will be focused on perpetrators wherever possible, rather than survivors, and will be taken in partnership with relevant agencies where appropriate. The organisation will support survivors to remain safely

in their home where this is their preferred option, subject to a thorough assessment of risk and the availability of appropriate safety measures.

2.5 We will work collaboratively with key partners and wider stakeholders to identify ways in which we can take early, effective intervention and improve our responses and service offering to tackle domestic abuse and, where appropriate, act against perpetrators, where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing domestic abuse.

2.6 We will provide a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance in cases of domestic abuse. For those cases that meet the threshold of a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), or if we have safeguarding concerns, we have a legal duty to share information with relevant agencies such as Adult, Social Care and Children and Family Services.

2.7 We will ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse know that they can meet our Tenancy Management Officers (or Safeguarding Lead) in confidence at our offices or at an agreed safe venue of their choice. An agreed method of contact will always be established to stay in contact with the person experiencing the abuse in order to ensure their personal safety.

2.8 We will carry out safety planning to provide support for the person experiencing domestic abuse and their children where present. Unless we are informed that another organisation has carried this out, our Tenancy Management Officers will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH).

2.9 We will share information between relevant agencies where the assessment against the DASH Risk Identification checklist meets the local authority threshold for MARAC referrals. This information will only be shared with those agencies attending the meeting.

2.10 We will work with relevant agencies to provide improved security to a customer's home, where required (lock changes, alarms, "Sanctuary" schemes etc.)

2.11 We will make a referral to external financial agencies for any required support relating to financial issues.

2.12 If appropriate we will signpost the individual experiencing domestic abuse to relevant organisations to provide legal advice where appropriate.

2.13 We will advise people experiencing domestic abuse of external agencies who can offer further advice and support dependent upon their needs, and work with these agencies to ensure a co-ordinated approach to prioritise the safety of their children where present.

2.14 We will report incidents to the Police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so, with their permission, where they feel too intimidated to report incidents themselves.

2.15 We will refer victims to the Local Authorities' homeless person's service in cases where emergency temporary accommodation is required. This can also involve referral to refuges via the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

2.16 We will offer support to anyone living in the household who feels that they are a victim of domestic abuse and endeavour to provide or obtain support for witnesses throughout our investigation and any further action that may arise.

3. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

3.1 CRHA is committed to maintaining confidentiality for all disclosures of domestic abuse and will handle personal information sensitively and in line with data protection legislation.

3.2 Information will be shared with other agencies only with the individual's informed consent, unless there is an immediate risk of serious harm to the individual or others, or where safeguarding duties apply in relation to children or vulnerable adults. In such circumstances, information may be shared without consent where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to protect life or prevent harm.

3.3 All information sharing will comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and relevant provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including its information-sharing powers.

3.4 Records relating to domestic abuse will be accurate, factual and securely stored, with access restricted to authorised colleagues only.

4. Publicity

4.1 CRHA will make informational materials about national and local domestic abuse support services available on our website.

5. Employees

5.1 All colleagues will promote and champion CRHA's commitment to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

5.2 The organisation will clearly define the roles and responsibilities of frontline staff, Tenancy Management Officers, safeguarding leads and senior management to ensure colleagues are able to recognise indicators of domestic abuse, respond appropriately and sensitively to disclosures, and make timely referrals to safeguarding teams and specialist support services in line with organisational procedures.

5.3 CRHA recognises that colleagues may themselves experience domestic abuse and is committed to providing a supportive and confidential workplace environment. Colleagues are encouraged to disclose concerns through confidential reporting routes and will be offered appropriate support through Human Resources and management. Where necessary and appropriate, the organisation will consider reasonable adjustments, including flexible working arrangements, to support colleagues safety, wellbeing and continued employment.

5.4 CRHA will provide regular domestic abuse training for relevant colleagues to ensure awareness, understanding and confidence in responding to domestic abuse.

5.5 Training will be proportionate to role and responsibility, with enhanced training provided for our Tenancy Management Officers and Safeguarding Lead.

5.6 Colleagues will be supported to understand key issues including coercive control, economic abuse and trauma-informed responses, ensuring that disclosures are handled sensitively, safely and in line with best practice.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Cases of domestic abuse will be investigated and logged on the SDM system and monitored on a weekly basis at the Personal Review Meetings (1-1's).

6.2 Confidentiality will be respected when dealing with a case of domestic abuse and information will be stored and protected on a need-to-know basis.

6.3 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, unless legislation changes to ensure that it continues to meet its objectives and take account of good practice.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

7.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with CRHA's Safeguarding Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Allocations and Lettings Policy, Data Protection Policy, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

7.2 These policies collectively provide the framework for responding to domestic abuse, ensuring that actions taken are lawful, consistent, fair and proportionate, and that safeguarding responsibilities, information sharing, tenancy decisions and equality considerations are fully integrated into practice.

Date Reviewed	Changes to the Policy	Date to be Reviewed	Approved By	Author
January 2023		January 2026	Executive	AM
January 2026	Section 1.4 has been added, Various changes in Section 2 has taken place with the deletion of item 2.2 and 2.13 and a change in wording in item 2.3 of the old policy. Items 2.3, 2.4, 2.11 & 2.12 have been added to the revised policy along with an additional section - Confidentiality & Information Sharing and Related Policies & Procedures. The section Employees has been changed throughout.	January 2029	Executive	AM