

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 Anyone can experience Domestic Abuse. Home Office research indicates that the majority of domestic abuse is directed against women. Saffron acknowledges that it also occurs in Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender relationships, in heterosexual relationships where men are abused by women and where grown up children abuse their parents.

Domestic Abuse is very common. It can affect one in four women and one in six men in their lifetimes, regardless of age, social class, race, disability or lifestyle. Certain characteristics may make someone more vulnerable to abuse, such as a physical disability, a language barrier, immigration status etc.

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Within the Domestic Abuse Act ([Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - GOV.UK](#)) 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

The definition can include modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation and Saffron will always try to recognise the wider forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) that might not fall under the definition of Domestic Abuse.

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
- Domestic Abuse and Disabled People –

Disabled people can be abused by partners, family members and paid carers. If you are disabled and experiencing abuse, it is common for abusers to use your impairments to control and hurt you through:

- a) Physical Abuse – deliberately ignoring your care needs, pushing you onto the floor when you are unable to get back up, hitting you when you are unable to get away or defend yourself. Restricting access to areas or preventing someone from leaving an area is also a method of physical abuse commonly used by carers (or those in a carer position) against someone with disabilities. E.g. keeping them limited to one area of the home, or preventing them leaving the home.
- b) Emotional Abuse – saying you couldn't cope without them, saying that no one else would want you because of impairments, humiliating you because you need help to use the toilet or other basic care and failing to provide it, removing aids which help you to be independent
- c) Sexual Abuse – disabled women in particular are twice as likely to be raped or assaulted
- d) Financial Abuse – controlling your finances, taking your money without you knowing or agreeing, spending your disability benefits on themselves

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

2.2 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'.

2.3 There is no form of Domestic Abuse that's not a crime, even if individual elements or events may appear to be below a criminal threshold (such as emotional abuse), the overall pattern of abuse makes it a crime.

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 should be read alongside Saffron's Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy. Saffron recognises that reports initially presented as noise nuisance, harassment, property damage, neighbour disputes or other forms of anti-social behaviour may be indicators of domestic abuse. Where domestic abuse is identified or suspected, the matter will not be managed solely as anti-social behaviour. Staff will follow Saffron's domestic abuse and safeguarding procedures, consider the safety and wishes of the victim/survivor and take appropriate action to reduce the risk of further harm.

Saffron has a responsibility to provide an appropriate housing response to residents experiencing domestic abuse. This may include safe contact arrangements, risk identification, safeguarding action, and referrals to specialist domestic abuse services, housing advice, property security measures, tenancy action and coordinated multi-agency planning.

Where there is immediate danger, the police or other emergency services will be contacted. Saffron will work with local authorities where homelessness or alternative accommodation duties apply. In all cases, Saffron will remain engaged with the survivor and relevant partner agencies to support their safety, housing security and ongoing needs.

4.2 Saffron recognises its role as part of the coordinated community response to domestic abuse and will use its housing, safeguarding and partnership responsibilities to support victims/survivors and reduce risk.

Saffron will work with the victim/survivor to understand their wishes, immediate safety, and housing circumstances. Depending on individual circumstances, this may include agreeing safe contact arrangements, completing or contributing to

risk identification, making safeguarding referrals, referring to specialist domestic abuse services, referring high-risk cases to MARAC, considering property security measures, reviewing tenancy options and working with partner agencies to support access to safe accommodation where required.

Where Saffron cannot directly provide a particular service or housing solution, it will make an appropriate referral and remain involved where necessary to support the victim/survivor and coordinate action with the relevant agency.

Victims/survivors will not be left to navigate services alone where Saffron can reasonably assist with the referral or housing response.

4.3 Saffron will take a 'victim/survivor -centred' approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse. Recognising that evidence of abuse may not always be readily available, Saffron will accept the victim/survivor account and will not insist on the victim/survivor providing proof of abuse. Saffron will also be guided by the victim/survivor 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 victim/survivor to take legal action but will offer advice if it is something they wish to pursue. This may include helping the victim/survivor 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/survivor 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 a 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/survivor 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 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/survivors.

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/survivors 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/survivors. 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/survivors of domestic abuse will be contacted by a trained member of staff within one working day from the date of the disclosure.

5.2 New applicants to Saffron Housing will be provided with a safe and appropriate opportunity to disclose domestic abuse. A disclosure will not disadvantage an applicant or prevent them from accessing housing services. Where domestic abuse is disclosed, staff will agree safe contact arrangements, consider immediate risks, provide information about available housing and support options, and make referrals to specialist domestic abuse or safeguarding services where appropriate.

When considering an offer accommodation, Saffron will take account of any known risks relating to the location, the perpetrator, children, support networks and the applicant's individual safety needs. Saffron will work with the applicant and relevant partner agencies to avoid, as far as reasonably possible, making an offer that could expose them to further harm.

5.3 The victim/survivor will be offered the opportunity to speak with a staff member of the same sex, where requested. Where an interpreter is required, Saffron will use an independent professional interpreter and will not use family members. A same-sex interpreter will also be arranged where requested and reasonably practicable.

5.4 Interviews will be carried out in a sympathetic and supportive manner. The victim/survivor will be assured of confidentiality. The victim/survivor will be advised of possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with the longer term.

5.5 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.

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

5.7 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.

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

5.9 Where the victim/survivor 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/survivor. We will support the victim/survivor to get advice on the best course of action for them and their family.

Where the victim/survivor has left the accommodation, Saffron will discuss their wishes, safety and preferred long-term housing outcome. Where it is safe, proportionate and supported by the available information, Saffron may consider taking possession or other tenancy enforcement action against the perpetrator, including action under the relevant domestic abuse grounds for possession or the terms of the tenancy agreement.

Where the victim/survivor and perpetrator hold a joint tenancy, Saffron will explain the available options may have significant legal and housing consequences. These may include an application to the court for the tenancy to be transferred, an assignment where this is legally permitted, possession action against the perpetrator, or consideration of a new sole tenancy at the existing property or suitable alternative accommodation.

Saffron will not advise or encourage a victim/survivor to make themselves intentionally homeless. Where a victim/survivor is considering ending a joint tenancy, Saffron will encourage them to seek advice from the relevant local authority or an independent legal adviser before taking any action. Saffron can make or support referrals to these services.

Any decision will be victim/survivor focused and will consider the victim/survivor safety, the risks associated with the property or location, the needs of any children or household members, the victim/survivor support networks and whether they wish to remain or leave the accommodation. Saffron will record the options discussed, the victim/survivor wishes and the reason for any housing or enforcement decision.

Saffron will review this provision and its associated procedures following any legislative changes affecting joint social tenancies, Notices to Quit, possession proceedings or tenancy transfer in domestic abuse cases.

5.10 If the victim/survivor 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/survivor is satisfied, they no longer require support. We will offer support for victim/survivor, 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 policy 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/survivors experiences of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background, for example, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnic group, race, 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/survivor 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/survivors get the right support. We will partner with and support local organisations with all relevant experience and understanding to better support victims/survivors 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 customer's 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 victims/survivors 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 Policy
- Supporting Colleagues Experiencing Domestic Abuse Policy
- Allocations Policy

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Arrears Policy
- Recharge Policy
- Lettings & Allocations 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
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998

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.

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