



# Domestic Abuse Policy

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<b>Consultations</b>	Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance ( DAHA)
<b>Associated procedure</b>	Domestic Abuse Procedure Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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# Introduction

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Connexus will take steps to assist and support customers and their families subjected to or threatened with domestic abuse. It applies to all customers regardless of tenure and applies to victims and perpetrators.
- 1.2 As a Housing Provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is absolutely essential that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the victim to offer support.
- 1.3 Scope: The policy applies to Connexus Homes Limited.

## 2. Definition

### Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 2.1 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 the following types of abuse:
  - Psychological
  - Physical
  - Sexual
  - Economic
  - Emotional
- 2.2 Controlling behaviour is 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 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. This definition includes so called 'honour' based abuse female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

## 3. Problem to Solve - Commitment to Dealing With Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 Connexus believes that none of its customers should live in fear of abuse from a current or former spouse, partner or other members of the household and will take steps to assist and support any persons suffering from or threatened with abuse or violence.

- 3.2 We recognise that domestic abuse has a detrimental effect on the stability and security of individuals, customers and their families. As such, we will:
- Work alongside specialist domestic abuse services when dealing with cases of domestic abuse;
  - Provide consistent services and advice to victims;
  - Hold perpetrators to account;
  - Ensure that we are consistent in the way that we deal with each case of domestic abuse;
  - Play an active role in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and follow any resulting action plans; and
  - Liaise with the police and safeguarding teams as necessary.

## 4. Method

### **Responding to a Report of Domestic Abuse**

- 4.1 On receiving a report of domestic abuse directly from a victim/survivor, contact will be made within 24 hours. Where a report of domestic abuse is received via a professional third party (e.g. a police officer) we will seek to establish from the third party the details that have been taken from the victim/survivor, the support that is in place and the action and/ or information is required from us. Where required, we will then contact the victim directly and offer an interview as above.
- 4.2 Where possible, we will assist and support the victim/survivor to remain in their home. In some cases, however, the victim/survivor may feel unable to return to their home, either in the immediate or longer term.
- 4.3 As a landlord, we have no provision for emergency or temporary housing, if the victim/survivor cannot return home and has nowhere else to stay, advice will be offered regarding options for rehousing with the Local Authority or other specialist domestic abuse service.
- 4.4 If the victim/ survivor is a sole tenant, consideration will be given to moving them via a 'direct let' where the police or another agency support this due to the significant risk posed by the perpetrator.

### **Legal Action Against the Perpetrator**

- 4.5 The Housing Act 1996 created the power for housing associations to evict a perpetrator of domestic abuse, whether or not they are a joint or sole tenant.
- 4.6 We will seek action, where possible, to remove the perpetrator from the tenancy and/or the property when the victim/survivor remains in the home. This may require emergency interim arrangements before a long term solution is sought through the courts. This will need to be supported by the victim/survivor and Police or specialist domestic abuse service due to the level of evidence required by the County court.
- 4.7 The option to evict a perpetrator will be discussed with the victim/survivor and they will be reassured of necessary support from their landlord or other agencies.

- 4.8 Injunctions can be sought by the victim, the Landlord and/or the National Centre for Domestic Violence on behalf of the victim/survivor. The relevant domestic abuse service can support the victim/survivor seeking legal advice.

### **Damage to and Security of the Property**

- 4.9 We will consider arranging and paying for additional security of a property in order that a victim/survivor of domestic abuse feels safe to return.
- 4.10 Where the Police wish to install additional security, permission will be given immediately subject to agreement in who will maintain such items.
- 4.11 In cases where the property has been damaged by a perpetrator of domestic abuse, repairs will be carried out in line with the Repairs Policy and Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- 4.12 Any damage will be photographed, recorded and a recharge raised to the perpetrator. Where appropriate, we may seek to take direct action against the perpetrator and report the damage to the Police as a crime.

### **Victim / Survivor Responsibilities**

- 4.13 We will provide support and assistance to victims/survivor as described in this policy. Victim/Survivors are encouraged to work with us, and support agencies, to ensure support offered is as effective as possible. Where victim/survivors fail to engage or show no willingness to engage, and where the abuse is having an impact on neighbours, we may consider addressing the matter using our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Should this be required, agreement from the Senior Housing Manager should be sought to proceed.

## **5. Measurement**

- 5.1 All domestic abuse cases will be recorded as serious anti-social behaviour on CX and discussed at one to ones.
- 5.2 Any personal details will only be shared on a need to know basis and any information collected will be confidential and secure.
- 5.3 We will endeavour to seek as many ways as possible to share information with relevant agencies within data sharing guidelines, however consent to share information is not required where there is a risk of harm.
- 5.4 Associated documents:
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
  - Rechargeable Repairs Policy
  - Repairs Standards Policy
  - Tenancy / Leasehold Agreement
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Domestic Violence Procedure