

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Easy Read - Domestic Abuse policy

- Everyone has the right to feel safe in their own home and Domestic abuse is a serious crime that often takes place in the home. Domestic Abuse often starts subtly and is often a hidden crime that goes unreported. It can show up in many ways – through words, actions or control. Whatever form it takes, it is harmful.
- We will take a person-centred, sensitive and supportive approach to working with victims or survivors, of Domestic Abuse. If a tenant discloses to us that they are experiencing domestic abuse or we receive a report that a tenant is being subjected to domestic abuse, we deal with it as domestic abuse. We will respond to all reports as an emergency, within one working day.
- Tenants are at risk of losing their homes if they perpetrate Domestic Abuse.
- We will take a person-centred, non-judgemental approach to support our tenants and families who are affected by Domestic Abuse (DA).
- Our Safer Neighbourhoods Team and Neighbourhood Management Team (Neighbourhood Managers) and are responsible for supporting tenants affected by Domestic Abuse.
- Domestic Abuse is defined by law. You can find these definitions in section 4 of the full policy.
- There are tenancy agreement clauses which prohibit Domestic Abuse. You can find these in Appendix 1 of this policy.
- We will use a risk assessment to understand the impact Domestic Abuse is having on the victim and their family, and to identify any risks of further harm occurring.
- We will work with victims and partner agencies to deal with Domestic Abuse proactively. This includes safeguarding partners where children are present in families or households affected by domestic abuse.
- We will explore a range of legal and non-legal tools and powers to support tenants affected by Domestic Abuse.
- To send a clear message and deter domestic abuse we will take the strongest possible action against individuals committing domestic abuse and consider the safety of the victim or survivor when deciding on appropriate action to take.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Everyone has the right to feel safe in their own home and Domestic abuse is a serious crime that often takes place in the home. Domestic Abuse often starts subtly and is often a hidden crime that goes unreported. It can show up in many ways – through words, actions or control. Whatever form it takes, it is harmful.
- 1.2 Both adults and children can be victims of Domestic Abuse. Domestic Abuse can occur in intimate relationships and familial relationships. The legal definitions of Domestic Abuse are detailed in this policy.
- 1.3 At Two Rivers Housing, we aim to promote a safe and secure home and environment for all our tenants and their families through working in partnership with other statutory agencies to prevent and tackle Domestic Abuse. We work across diverse communities and are committed to working with our tenants and their families to help address domestic abuse, domestic violence, stalking and harassment.
- 1.4 We aim to work with our tenants and partner agencies to resolve domestic abuse through prevention and early intervention, to stop escalation and further risk of harm. We will work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver these core commitments.
- 1.5 Our Domestic Abuse Policy sets out how we will work with our tenants, communities, and partner agencies to:
- Prevent and tackle domestic abuse experienced by our tenants
 - Ensure we take a person-centered, non-judgmental, and robust approach tackling domestic abuse
 - Ensure our tenants are clear about what actions we can and will take if they are affected by Domestic Abuse
 - Consider vulnerabilities of victims and their families when assessing which intervention actions are appropriate to dealing with each case
 - Ensure tenants feel supported by Two Rivers (and partners) where they may be affected by domestic abuse
 - Ensure all tenants are treated in a fair and equitable manner. We will work to ensure we tackle discrimination, promote equal rights, and treat our customers according to their individual household needs.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Two Rivers is committed to responsible neighbourhood management. We believe that our tenants should live in safety, free from harm. Domestic Abuse can destroy families, and severe cases lead to loss of life. Housing can be a key barrier in escaping a cycle of abuse.

- 2.2 We will work with colleagues, tenants, neighbourhoods and partner agencies to prevent and tackle domestic abuse by taking a preventative, proactive and person-centred approach.
- 2.3 Our Safer Neighbourhoods Team will be responsible for responding to all initial reports or disclosures of Domestic Abuse. The Safer Neighbourhoods Team will deal with urgent or more high risk and complex domestic abuse cases. They will also provide advice and support to colleagues from other teams to enable them to support tenants affected by domestic abuse. They will lead our response to working with partners to ensure action is taken for the safety of tenants and their families. In particular for escalation within statutory partners, if there are blockages and barriers for supporting tenants and their families where they may be victims of domestic abuse. They will undertake legal action where necessary, or where non legal remedies have not been successful or are not suitable.
- 2.3 Our Neighbourhood Management Team (Neighbourhood Managers) are also responsible for supporting tenants who are affected by ongoing domestic abuse and will work with them with the aim of preventing problems from escalating and becoming worse. They will build trusted relationship that will more likely encourage tenants to disclose domestic abuse or feel comfortable asking for help and support. They will work with local partnership agencies to support victims of domestic abuse.

3. Policy Scope

- 3.1 This Policy defines what Domestic Abuse is, in accordance with the legal definition.
- 3.2 This policy sets out:
- How we will work with and support victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse
 - How we will assess and investigate reports of Domestic Abuse
 - How we will deal with perpetrators of Domestic Abuse
 - How we will recognise and effectively respond, setting out expectations that victims and survivors can have of Two Rivers when we are dealing with a case Domestic Abuse
 - How we will work with partner agencies, including sharing of information to take address and prevent domestic abuse
 - The tools and powers we will use to tackle Domestic Abuse
- 3.4 Any reference to Domestic Abuse in this policy should also be taken to include acts of domestic violence, stalking and all behaviours mentioned in the legislation in section 4 of this policy.

- 3.3 This policy applies to all Two Rivers Housing tenants, their household members, and visitors. This includes general needs and Home Plus accommodation, temporary accommodation, shared owners, and leaseholders. The procedures outlined in the policy apply to reports of Domestic Abuse affecting or caused by our tenants, their family, household members, and visitors, including children.
- 3.4 Any reference to ‘we’, ‘our’ or ‘us’ in this policy refers to Two Rivers Housing.
- 3.5 The words ‘survivor’ and ‘victim’ are used interchangeably in this policy.
- 3.6 This policy should be read alongside other relevant policies, including:
- Neighbourhood Management Policy,
 - Safeguarding Policy,
 - Reasonable Adjustments Policy,
 - Complaints Policy,
 - Privacy Notice
- 3.8 Relevant regulation and legislation that shape our Domestic Abuse policy and procedures includes, but is not limited to, the:
- Regulator of Social Housing Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015
 - Family Law Act 1996
 - Housing Acts 1985 and 1996
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - Data Protection Act 2018

4. What is Domestic Abuse?

- 4.1 Domestic abuse is defined in section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 4.2 *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.*
- 4.3 *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 (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).*
- *psychological, emotional or other abuse;*

It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

4.4 Definition of “personally connected”:

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 (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);*
- *they are relatives.*

4.5 Children as victims of domestic abuse:

Any reference in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:

- *sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and*
- *is related to A or B.*

4.2 Stalking is often associated with domestic abuse. Stalking is defined by the Police and Crown Prosecution Service as:

When someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, threatened or distressed. Stalking is a form of harassment where the stalker carries out behaviours which are fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated. The types of behaviours which make up stalking are not prescribed; instead the legislation contains examples of how stalking can take place.

Stalking can include:

- *Following you*
- *Contacting you or trying to contact you in any way*
- *Publishing material about you or pretending to be you online or elsewhere*
- *Monitoring your internet use, emails or other electronic communications*
- *Loitering near places you go (whether public or private spaces)*
- *Interfering with your property*
- *Watching or spying on you*

4.3 We will use the above definitions when risk assessing and addressing disclosures or reports of domestic abuse or domestic abuse related stalking.

4.4 Two Rivers' tenancy agreements clearly state tenants' responsibilities relating to domestic abuse. More detailed information can be found in **Appendix 1** of this policy.

5. Supporting tenants who are victims or survivors of Domestic Abuse – Person centered approach

5.1 Two Rivers will take a person-centred, sensitive and supportive approach to working with victims or survivors, of Domestic Abuse. If a tenant discloses to us that they are experiencing domestic abuse or we receive a report that a tenant is being subjected to domestic abuse, we deal with it as domestic abuse. We will respond to all reports as an emergency, within one working day.

5.2 We deal with all reports in a non-judgemental manner. When a report is received, we'll ask if the police have also been contacted. We will advise victims or witnesses to call 999 if in danger of immediate harm, if safe to do so.

5.3 Applying a person-centred approach means we will assist the victim of domestic abuse to reach a decision which they feel best secures their safety. We do this by reviewing their accommodation, enabling the level of support they want through referrals to other agencies and taking action against the perpetrator, they feel is most appropriate.

5.4 Where a tenant reports Domestic Abuse to us directly, we will ensure that the police and other relevant partners are informed, where this is agreed with the tenant and feels safe to do so. It is important to note that there will be circumstances where we have a duty to share high risk of harm occurring with statutory partners. Refer to section 10.

5.5 Colleagues may also become aware of Domestic Abuse through other tenant interactions and disclosures or may suspect that Domestic Abuse is taking place within a tenant's home. In such situations colleagues should report this information to the Safer Neighbourhoods team.

- 5.4 To help us understand risk and respond appropriately, we will use a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment, and Honour-based violence) risk assessment for all Domestic Abuse cases, as well as for any case where elements of Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence or stalking are present. This assessment supports us in identifying immediate and longer-term risks so that we can tailor our response and put the right safety measures in place.
- 5.5 We will adopt a harm-based approach. This will include a combination of professional judgement and using the national DASH risk assessment framework that takes account of the tenants' and their family's circumstances, to assess the impact of Domestic Abuse. This allows us to:
- Support victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse more comprehensively
 - Assess the risk of harm and impact more accurately and provide a more person-focused, tailored response in every case
 - Assess any vulnerabilities that victims, survivors and perpetrators might have, and any reasonable adjustments necessary
 - Assess next steps and create a more specific action plan with the person reporting Domestic Abuse, including reasonable timescales
- 5.6 When the DASH risk assessment or professional judgement tells us that a case is high risk, we have a legal duty to refer it to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference). We will explain this clearly to victims/survivors and ensure they understand how MARAC can help increase safety and support.
- 5.7 We will take a coordinated, multi-agency approach when responding to disclosures or reports of Domestic Abuse cases. With consent and where it is safe and appropriate, we will work closely with colleagues and partner agencies to ensure victims or survivors receive the right support, at the right time for them.
- 5.8 We will work side-by-side with victims or survivors to understand what safety planning is needed for them and their family. Where additional specialist support is needed, we will make timely referrals to appropriate agencies to ensure that safety plans are as strong and comprehensive as possible.
- 5.9 Measures that Two Rivers may take in reducing the risk of harm to customers who are experiencing Domestic Abuse include (but are not limited to):
- Fitting of enhanced security measures to properties
 - Agreeing to a Managed Move to move a tenant to another one of our homes urgently

- Facilitating emergency housing for a tenant fleeing Domestic Abuse from another area in conjunction with the relevant Local Authority holding duty
- Providing advice and support to engage with relevant specialist organisations
- Providing financial support to allow emergency moves (for example deferring rent or arrears payments for a short period or access to hardship fund to buy essential items)
- Providing advice on welfare benefits and funding available for victims of domestic abuse who are seeking safety

- 5.10 Where victims/survivors would like us to, we will work with support workers, advocates, family members or other professionals where we have authorisation to do so. Our focus at all times will be on ensuring victims/survivors feel empowered and supported, while protecting confidentiality and avoiding any action that could increase risk.
- 5.11 We will always handle information sensitively and treat confidentiality as a priority. We will discuss with victims/survivors when and why information may need to be shared with other agencies, ensuring they understand how this supports their safety.
- 5.12 We will always be honest and transparent about the actions we can take and any limitations. We will keep victims/survivors updated in line with agreed timescales, explain any delays, and ensure they are never left without clarity about what is happening and why.
- 5.13 We will share information openly with victims/survivors wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so, ensuring they feel informed, empowered and involved in decisions about their case.
- 5.14 We will provide colleagues with training, clear guidance, and procedures so that they can most effectively deal with reports of Domestic Abuse, use the appropriate tools and legal routes and are aware of the wider issues associated with Domestic Abuse including safeguarding duties.

6. Moving for safety

- 6.1 Victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse have already dealt with significant impact and upheaval in their lives and should not have to move home if they do not wish to. Where safe to do so, we will always aim to deal with the perpetrator's behaviour and take action against them to remove them from the home (or other measures necessary to enable victims/survivors to remain in their homes safely).
- 6.2 In very serious cases, we may consider whether a managed move is appropriate for the victim where there is a risk to safety. This could be through an internal managed

move process or providing housing options advice in line with our Allocations and Neighbourhood Management Policy.

- 6.3 Where perpetrators of Domestic Abuse are evicted or leave Two Rivers housing voluntarily, we will share information with partner agencies to try and limit further impact on communities.

7. Reporting Domestic Abuse

- 7.1 Any individual who witnesses or is a victim or survivor of domestic abuse should promptly report the matter to the Police, their local domestic abuse outreach service, or Two Rivers Housing. This can be reported to us in the following ways:

- **In person at our office** - our address is Rivers Meet, Cleeve Mill Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire, GL18 1DS. See [How to find us](#)
Our opening hours are 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday – Friday, but on a Thursday, we open later at 10.30am. Our office is closed on public holidays.
- **By post** - at the address above
- **By email** - customerservices@2rh.org.uk
- **By phone** - Freephone: 0800 316 0897
When the office is closed, calls will be transferred to our 24/7 out-of-hours service. Please note all calls may be recorded for training and/or monitoring purposes.

- 7.2 **If someone is hurt or is at risk of immediate harm, you should always call the emergency services on 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-immediate assistance.** Two Rivers are not a first-responder organisation and cannot act as such.

8. Working together to address Domestic Abuse

- 8.1 Multi-agency working is vital for a successful response to Domestic Abuse. We will use a case conferencing approach with our internal teams and work closely with partner agencies to share information, assess risk, offer support to victims/survivors (and perpetrators where necessary) and progress cases as proactively as possible. We commit to professionally challenging both ourselves and partner agencies where we feel that we could be working together better or achieving better outcomes.
- 8.2 Many tools and powers for resolving Domestic Abuse sit with our partner agencies. We will work proactively with partner agencies to take joined-up action, to avoid duplication of work and to encourage the use of their powers where the powers we have are not appropriate, proportionate or achievable. There is more information on resolutions in 'Dealing with Domestic Abuse - tools and Powers' at section 12 of this policy.

8.3 Working together in this way enables us to:

- **Understand wider patterns of behaviour and their impact**, rather than focusing only on isolated incidents. This helps us to better recognise risk, respond more compassionately, and support victims/survivors in a meaningful way.
- **Work proactively alongside victims and survivors**, taking time to listen, gather information safely, keep them informed, and prioritise their wellbeing and safety.
- **Engage with perpetrators where appropriate**, to challenge and address harmful behaviour while keeping victims/survivors' safety at the centre of all decisions.
- **Collaborate closely with partner agencies**, ensuring information is shared responsibly and safely so that effective, joined-up action can be taken to protect victims/survivors and the wider community.
- **Provide support that is tailored to individual needs**, recognising that each person's experience is unique and requires a compassionate, person-centred response.

9. Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

- 9.1 To send a clear message and deter domestic abuse we will take the strongest possible action against individuals committing domestic abuse and consider the safety of the victim or survivor when deciding on appropriate action to take.
- 9.2 To help keep victims or survivors safe and enable us to take proportionate and effective action, we may need to gather additional evidence. We will work collaboratively with victims/survivors to identify safe ways to do this and ensure they feel supported throughout.
- 9.3 We'll take a robust stance against perpetrators of domestic abuse, and where possible we'll take actions against individuals committing domestic abuse.
- 9.4 Perpetrating domestic abuse is a serious breach of tenancy. If the perpetrator is a tenant of Two Rivers, we'll consider taking appropriate tenancy action against them, including possession action.
- 9.5 We'll provide general housing advice to the perpetrator where necessary.
- 9.6 Where the perpetrator is willing to confront their abusive behaviour, we'll refer them to the appropriate support services.
- 9.7 Any support or action plan offered to the perpetrator will be centred around the voice and safety of the victim or survivor of domestic abuse.

10. Working with people with vulnerabilities, and making reasonable adjustments

- 10.1 We are committed to ensuring people have equitable access to our services whatever their circumstances and one of the ways we do this is through reasonable adjustments to remove barriers or reduce any disadvantage.
- 10.2 In addition to the above we recognise that some complainants, victims or perpetrators may have specific needs that means they may require additional support. This could be, but is not limited to, people with:
- Any form of disability or vulnerability
 - Neurodiversity
 - Drug or alcohol issues
 - Health or mental health issues
 - Children at risk
 - At-risk adults
 - Experience of living in care
- 10.3 In our approach to make reasonable adjustments we will work with victims/survivors' complainants, witnesses and perpetrators who have vulnerabilities or additional needs, to gather relevant information that might help us to work with them. We may work with support workers, advocates, family members, or other professionals with a disclosure authority to ensure a person-centred approach to resolving Domestic Abuse.
- 10.4 Where a perpetrator of Domestic Abuse has such vulnerability or additional needs, this will not be a barrier to taking enforcement action, when necessary, but we will also try and ensure that they have access to support to help address any unacceptable behaviour where appropriate.

11 Information sharing

- 11.1 To be able to prevent, investigate and resolve Domestic Abuse adequately, it is essential that we share information with partner agencies.
- 11.2 Throughout cases we will maintain appropriate confidentiality and act in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations and any information sharing protocols we have in place.
- 11.3 It is important to understand that in certain circumstances confidentiality and consent to information sharing is overridden by legal obligations to share information, for example for the prevention or detection of crime, and for safeguarding purposes.

11.4 Where we are made aware of domestic abuse affecting one of our tenants and they have children, or children or vulnerable adults are living in the household, we have a legal duty to make a referral to social care to ensure that support is provided to the victim and their family/household.

12. Dealing with Domestic Abuse – tools and powers

12.1 There are specific legal tools and powers in place to address domestic abuse. Most of these are not available to Two Rivers, and this is why we have to work closely with partner agencies and share information to support victims/survivors. Some of the powers available are:

- Non-molestation orders
- Occupation orders
- Restraining orders
- Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN)
- Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO)

12.2 In addition to the above, we may explore non-legal and legal housing-related remedies to tackle domestic abuse, according to the available evidence. Some of the tools and powers we may use are:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions
- Serving Notice of Seeking Possession
- Possession proceedings (evictions)
- Referrals to Safe Partnership
- Referrals to other support agencies

12.3 Every case is different, and our involvement in it will depend on the specific circumstances. We will work with partner agencies and victims to consider the most appropriate tools to use, taking into account the impact domestic abuse is having on victims and their families, and the risk of further harm occurring.

12.4 We may also work with partner agencies, such as the Police and Local Authorities, to support use of powers available to them, including but not limited to:

- Criminal investigations
- Criminal Behaviour Orders

12.5 Legal actions will be approved by the Head of Safer Neighbourhoods before any application is made to the Courts.

- 12.6 Possession proceedings will be signed off by an Executive Director before any application is made to the Court.
- 12.7 Where a legal order such as an injunction has been put in place, the case will remain open for the duration of that order and an updated action plan will be developed with victims/survivors once the order has been served on the perpetrator.

13. Making a complaint about service

- 13.1 If any party is dissatisfied with the services we provide around Domestic Abuse, they can request any of the following:
- 13.2 **Internal case review** – a case and may be conducted by the Head of Safer Neighbourhoods or by an independent specialist. The case will be reviewed within a timescale agreed with the complainant, and we will provide feedback on the case as well as recommending or confirming next steps.
- 13.3 **Formal Complaint** – through our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy process. More information is on our website [Complaints - Two Rivers Housing - page 1](#)
- 13.4 A complaint can be made to the Housing Ombudsman Service for investigation if tenants have completed Two Rivers' complaint process and the issues have not been resolved. The Housing Ombudsman has an online complaints form which you can access here:
[Online complaint form | Housing Ombudsman Service](#)

14. Service Monitoring and Review

- 14.1 Case audits will be conducted randomly each month, to review the operational delivery of this policy.
- 14.2 The impact of this policy will be monitored through the following measures:
- Monitoring the volume and outcomes of Domestic Abuse and MARAC cases monthly
 - Monitoring tenant satisfaction measures
 - Transaction tenant satisfaction surveys

Appendix 1 – tenancy clauses relating to ASB

Domestic violence

You must not assault your husband or wife or partner or former husband or wife or partner or other family member whether they are living with you or not, and you must not harass them or use mental, emotional or sexual abuse that might be expected to cause anyone who lives with you to leave your home.

Nuisance and anti-social behaviour

- a You are responsible for the conduct of all people (including children) living in or visiting your home, and you or any person living in or visiting your home must not do any of the following:
- cause a nuisance or annoyance to anyone in the locality;
 - harass, threaten, or use violence towards anyone in the locality; any of our employees, contractors or agents; or anyone living in or visiting your home; and
 - use or permit your home to be used for any criminal, immoral or illegal purpose.
- b We may take legal action to evict you if you or any other person (including children) living in or visiting your home;
- causes a nuisance or annoys anyone or behaves in an anti-social way;
 - is convicted of using your home for illegal purposes;
 - is convicted of an arrestable offence committed in your home or in the locality of your home;
 - does anything that could cause a danger to anyone in your home or in the locality;
 - commits an arrestable offence either in your home or in the locality of your home;
 - does anything that could cause a danger to anyone in your home or in the locality of your home; or
 - tampers with any fire fighting equipment, close circuit television equipment, door entry or alarm systems.