



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

DATE: 10 SEPTEMBER 2019

Northumberland Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2019

Report of: Paul Johnston, Executive Director, Place

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Resilience

Purpose of report

To present members with the new draft **Northumberland County Council Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2019**, the purpose of which is to inform how Northumberland County Council's Housing Service will assist and support tenants experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the draft Domestic Abuse Policy, which sets out how the Council will respond to tenants who may be either victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the "We want you to feel Safe, Healthy and Cared for" [LIVING] " priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021 which states

We will not tolerate any form of abuse, and safeguarding your welfare will be of paramount concern.

Key issues

- 1) As a housing provider the Council is well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and the policy sets out how the Council will work positively and proactively with victims of abuse and offer support. The Policy also incorporates the most recent definition of domestic abuse as defined by the Home Office.

- 2) Northumberland Housing Services have applied to become a member of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) which is a partnership between Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, Peabody, and Gentoo Group. The purpose of the group is to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process.
- 3) To become accredited Housing Services have to comply with the National Domestic Abuse Service Standards through examining the service delivery and practice, to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

The Standards cover the following priority areas:

- Policy and procedures;
- Case management, monitoring and evaluation;
- Risk management;
- Inclusivity and accessibility;
- Holding perpetrators accountable: support, enforcement and prevention;
- Partnership working;
- Training; and
- Publicity and awareness

3) The draft Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy is the first stage in the process to becoming an accredited member of the DAHA.

Background

The Council has applied to become an accredited member of the DAHA which is a core part of the Governments "Ending violence against women and girls strategy: 2016 to 2020.

There are many benefits to Housing Services in signing up to the DAHA standard, they include the following:

- Improve staff skills and confidence in identifying and dealing with domestic abuse.
- Ensure tenants get the right response every time.
- Being part of the DAHA will ensure the housing teams are ready to support tenants when they need it most. People suffering domestic abuse will often experience 30+ incidents before reporting the abuse to anyone.
- Reduce costs from violence-related repairs, turnover of stock, and rent arrears.

Proposed Changes

This is a new policy that will ensure that all members of Housing Services staff can identify and respond to incidents of domestic abuse with confidence, ensuring that all victims of domestic abuse are treated in a fair, compassionate and effective way at all times.

Implications

Policy	Supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2021
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Finance and value for money	None - implementation can be met from existing resources
Legal	Proposal will enhance council's general safeguarding responsibilities and seek to support role as a Responsible Authority under associated crime and disorder legislation.
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	n/a
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	none
Crime & Disorder	Supports national, regional and local objectives to reduce domestic violence and provide support to victims.
Customer Consideration	Intended to provide a positive and structured approach to benefit tenants who may be a victim or perpetrators of domestic abuse
Carbon reduction	n/a
Wards	Those where the council owns and manages housing stock

Background papers:

Northumberland County Council Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2019

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XQzLDGUVJqWUv46wkzL-l7myjkws6sDoZpZCsWxFWoc/edit>

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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