

# COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OSC

## REPORT TO CABINET

10 SEPTEMBER 2019

### Northumberland County Council Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2019

John Riddle, Cabinet Member: Planning, Housing and Resilience and Phil Soderquest, Head of Housing and Public Protection presented the report to the Committee at their meeting on 30 August 2019.

The Committee welcomed this very good report and highlighted the following issues:

- whilst members noted that the Policy referred to it being applied regardless of gender or sexuality in the definition, they felt that this should be emphasised more prominently throughout the document. Councillor Riddle was keen to endorse that point and agreed to amend the final draft accordingly;
- the Council's housing and property service staff had been trained in spotting signs of abuse and had already reported a number of incidents to the MASH team. Members were advised that the Council was liaising with other housing providers in the county to encourage the provision of similar training for their staff;
- members recognised that this raised safeguarding issues, particularly for children living in abusive households;
- there was a suggestion that the Homefinder website should include a reference that tenants had to comply with this policy;
- in the list of definitions of domestic abuse in heading 3, the phrase "but is not limited to" should be added against each one that states "can include", for example: **Physical abuse** can include, *but is not limited to* hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing, shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.
- the list of forms of discriminatory abuse, as also set out in that part of the report, had been legally defined;
- scalding and burning should be added list of physical abuses, and
- there was also a suggestion that the Council should upload a video on the relevant websites showing the type of behaviour that is not acceptable for tenants, similar to those posted by other authorities. This could also be used as a training tool.

The Committee **agreed** that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that it supported the recommendation in the report.

**COUNCILLOR JEFF REID**

**CHAIRMAN**