

WHOLE HOUSING RESPONSE

to **Domestic Abuse**



AIM OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit will help you to contribute to tackling domestic abuse.

It helps you **recognise** some potential warning signs that indicate domestic abuse might be taking place behind closed doors and offers guidance on steps to take in **responding** appropriately when someone discloses abuse. It also signposts to the local domestic abuse service in Cheshire East and tells you how to **refer** for support and what steps to take in **recording** what you have seen and done.



INTRODUCTION

Almost two million people in the UK experience domestic abuse a year.

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner, ex-partner or family member. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to the following; psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. Domestic abuse can affect women and men of all ages and economic backgrounds. It can happen in any type of relationship – whether gay, straight, married or not, with or without children, and it can affect people from different cultures and traditions. It can also affect wider family and friends.

Every year thousands of victims of domestic abuse find it hard to access appropriate support.

A study conducted by SafeLives revealed that 85% of victims of abuse sought help five times on average from professionals, in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse.



THE ROLE OF THE HOUSING SECTOR
IS ESSENTIAL TO THE RESPONSE TO
DOMESTIC ABUSE.

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse
0300
123
5101
24/7 Hub



The role of the housing sector is essential to the response to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is often described as being a hidden crime and one that happens behind closed doors.

Housing providers can often be the only agency ever to see behind those doors.

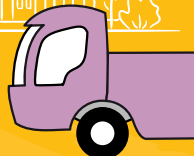
Early intervention by housing providers can help to safeguard adults and children from harm, as well as help to prevent escalation and the recurrence of domestic abuse.

We are not asking you to become specialists in handling domestic abuse, nor that you should take on the work of counsellors or specialist domestic abuse workers.

What we want to do is help you to know what practical steps you can take if someone discloses, or you suspect domestic abuse.



IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT
DOMESTIC ABUSE CAN CAUSE
HOUSING COSTS OF £160
MILLION PER YEAR



Due to domestic abuse, victims and their children often have to leave their homes. As a result, their schooling and relationships are often disrupted and it can cause, in some instances, homelessness. On the other hand, the perpetrator will stay in the property and will often not be held accountable for the abuse. This can lead to repeated abusive behaviours and can lead to them continuing their abuse with another partner or family member. This can lead to further costs to housing providers and additional interventions needed further down the line.

It has been estimated that domestic abuse can cause housing costs of £160 million per year. This is before taking into account other issues such as debts due to financial abuse. The financial cost to housing providers due to domestic abuse often includes but is not limited to the following; damage to housing stock, rent arrears, mediation services between neighbours and the cost of eviction and re-letting a property.



RECOGNISING THE ISSUES

- spotting the signs

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse
0300
123
5101
24/7 Hub

It is not always easy to detect when someone is experiencing domestic abuse however there are several warning signs that might indicate someone is experiencing domestic abuse. We've listed some of the warning signs that housing providers may encounter here:



Not all the repairs reported in households will be related to domestic abuse. However, domestic abuse related repairs are common, and as domestic abuse can involve physical violence as well as high levels of intimidation, it is likely that this will result in damage to the property. This may include holes in walls and doors, damage to fixtures or broken locks and doors.

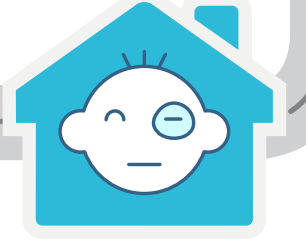


Rent arrears in a household may not always be related to the domestic abuse. However, the loss of a income from a partner leaving the household, or financial abuse are two factors that must be considered in the context of rent arrears for victims of domestic abuse

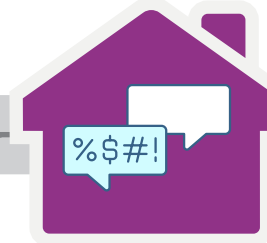
Neighbours can be the first to alert services of domestic abuse and may hear shouting or violence. These reports can often be reported to ASB teams and reacted to as nuisance behaviour. This is an inappropriate response to domestic abuse, as it can significantly increase the risk to victims and prevent future disclosures. Therefore if you receive reports of shouting and violence from neighbours, please respond to this as domestic abuse, until you have evidence otherwise.



They have unexplained marks, bruises or other injuries or they wear clothing that isn't appropriate for the weather - such as long sleeves or scarves in summer or sunglasses when it's cloudy - to conceal their physical injuries

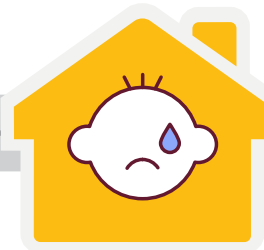


They complain that their partner is "moody" or has a bad temper. They might not use the term "abuse," but anger, aggression and violence (even when alcohol fuelled) are signs of domestic abuse.



Their partner or ex partner is constantly calling, texting or messaging whilst you are on a visit.

Their partner seems to make all the decisions or has all the financial



Frequent missed appointments may indicate that something is happening in the home that they don't want professionals to be aware of, or that they are being told that they cannot attend appointments.



Their partner insults them in front of other people, they're worried about making their partner angry or they make excuses for their partner's behaviour.



Substance misuse may not always be related to domestic abuse. However, using substances or alcohol as a coping mechanism is common. If they have been drinking more or have started using drugs, which is out of character, this could be an indication that they are experiencing domestic abuse.



RESPONDING - to a disclosure and opening a conversation when abuse is suspected.

The aim of starting a conversation is to be supportive.

Many people dealing with domestic abuse will never feel comfortable sharing their experience as they may not even be ready to admit it to themselves. Many victims may not use the label 'domestic abuse' for their experiences or they may not be familiar with the term (especially if they are speakers of other languages), or they may think that it only applies to physical violence.



Begin by asking indirect questions, to establish an empathetic relationship with the person. For example:

How are you doing at the moment?

Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted/ upset at the moment – are you ok?

If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you

Is there any extra support you need at the moment?

Do you feel safe in your home?

**Is there any extra support you need at the moment?
Remember as a housing provider you can also support by putting in place safety measures on the property.**

Validate their experience

It is important to believe and respond to all disclosures of domestic abuse. After someone discloses, take a moment to recognise how difficult it may have been for them to trust you and let you in on what they have been experiencing. It may be the first time they have told anyone about the abuse. For this reason, it is important to validate their experience and reassure them that you believe them.



Refer for support: Taking a proactive and supportive approach can help prevent domestic abuse. The four r's approach is a framework commonly used to secure a clear response to domestic abuse.

Recognise: Use this toolkit to recognise the problem. Domestic abuse is an issue that everyone can play a part in tackling.

Respond: Use this toolkit to respond appropriately to disclosure. The housing provider can also support by putting in place safety measures on the property. Onward referrals and safety planning not only benefit the family, but also the housing provider in the long term.

Refer: Provide access to support and signpost appropriately to external organisations who can help those that have disclosed abuse. My CWA offers a whole family service to adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Cheshire East. Therefore housing providers can refer the victim, their children and the perpetrator to for support. Referrals can be made to My CWA via the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub. This a 24 hour point of contact for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or anyone concerned



for others. People are assessed according to risk and need and the right combination of services are put in place for the whole family. putting in place safety measures on the property. Onward referrals and safety planning not only benefit the family, but also the housing provider in the long term.

Remember if someone is at immediate risk of harm, please call the police on 999.

Record: If someone discloses abuse, it's important to follow your workplace procedures - recording the details of what is said as accurately as possible. Should the abuse become subject to criminal proceedings, this is an exhibit and should be given to the police.

Tips for recording - remember **FACTS**:

F
A
C
T
S

FACTUAL

Recording details of what is said as accurately as possible, based on factual information.

ASSESSMENT

What has happened?

CLARITY

Use plain and clear language so that everybody will understand

TIMELY

Record as soon as you can, whilst it is still fresh in your mind.

SPECIFIC

Think about the purpose of the recording - make sure it is relevant and concise





Charity Number 1153273

Company Limited By Guarantee 8508288

