



PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES

Domestic Abuse policy

Version:	Final
Lead Directorate:	Homes, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration
EIA completed:	July 2016
Approved by:	Customer Focus Committee, July 2016

1. Purpose

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) believes that domestic abuse is unacceptable under any circumstances and that all residents, their families, other occupants of their home and visitors to their home have a right to live their lives without fear of domestic abuse. This policy sets out Plymouth Community Homes' commitment and approach to:

- Identifying incidents or alleged incidents of domestic abuse.
- Working to prevent incidents of domestic abuse.
- Assisting and supporting victims of domestic abuse.
- Taking appropriate action to tackle perpetrators living in our accommodation.

2. Definitions

PCH has adopted the Home Office definition of domestic abuse which is as follows:

'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
- controlling and coercive behaviour
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse'.

Examples of psychological or emotional abuse can include creating isolation by not allowing people to see other people or go anywhere on their own, use of threats, or humiliating and undermining behaviour in front of others.

Controlling behaviour is defined as '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'.

Coercive behaviour is defined as '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'. Coercive behaviour can include forced marriage and so called 'honour violence'.

Physical abuse can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pushing and shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, murder.

Sexual abuse can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a survivor to take part in unwanted sexual acts, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.

Financial abuse can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name or allowing no say in how monies are spent.

The Home Office guidance defines family members as:

'Mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws, common-law or step-family':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-government-domestic-violence-and-abuse-definition>

3. Policy statement

PCH is committed to providing homes in which residents want to live, work, and that are safe and secure. Domestic abuse incidents have a serious and devastating impact on an individual's sense of security, health and well-being. PCH will treat all incidents or alleged incidents with the utmost seriousness, and will take a zero-tolerance approach to dealing with domestic abuse.

PCH aims to:

- Prevent domestic abuse by providing a clear message through our tenancy agreement, joint working and promotion and raising awareness with residents and their communities.
- Identify the signs of domestic abuse, both at the start of a tenancy and during the ongoing occupation of our properties, and assist and support victims to take appropriate action.

- Train staff so that they are equipped to identify incidents or alleged incidents of domestic abuse and to assist and support victims.
- Assist and support victims of domestic abuse to access appropriate services as early as possible, to take appropriate action and to make choices about what they wish to do.
- Give residents the confidence to report domestic abuse in different ways, including in person, in writing, by telephone, online or via a third party such as an advocate, friend or police officer.
- Ensure victims know that they can meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue.
- Ensure we treat all matters relating to domestic abuse with appropriate sensitivity, consistency, confidentiality and timeliness.
- Continue to provide support to victims over whatever period it is required, even if this proves to be an extended timescale.
- Enable victims to remain in their own homes through provision of advice, support and security measures, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Work with partners and support multi agency and partnership working including Plymouth Domestic Abuse Partnership and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), and attend meetings as required.
- Respond to matters of domestic abuse within the context of principles relating to adult and child safeguarding.
- Take appropriate measures to tackle perpetrators living in PCH accommodation.
- Comply with relevant guidance including Devon Registered Housing Providers' Domestic Abuse Code of Good Practice.
- Be sensitive to the diverse needs of victims and children considering their age, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender.
- Recognise socio-economic factors which may impact on those experiencing domestic abuse, such as low income, low literacy or numeracy skills, isolation or caring status.
- Publicise our approach and raise awareness amongst staff and residents.

4. Procedures

PCH has a procedure to support this policy which sets out how we respond to allegations or incidents of domestic abuse.

5. Monitoring and review

PCH will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice, current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies.

6. Data protection

In applying this policy, all members of staff must comply with PCH's data protection policy and ensure that personal information supplied by customers is protected at all times.

7. Equality and diversity

PCH will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

PCH will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request. We will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.