

Housing Domestic Abuse Policy for Tenants

Stevenage Borough Council

2026

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Owner	Sarah Pateman
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Author	Tania King Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer
Business Unit and Team	Community Advice and Support
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equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Stevenage Borough Council has zero tolerance for violence and abuse. This policy will set out how the Housing department will tackle domestic abuse, support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and hold perpetrators to account.

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims and survivors, their families, and the wider community. It can happen to anyone, in any type of relationship including ex-partners, family members or those who have or had parental responsibility for a child. We know domestic abuse is rarely confined to a single incident, may not involve physical abuse, and typically forms a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour. We support the VAWG Strategy's recognition that the majority of victims and survivors are women, and the majority of perpetrators are men.

This policy supports the vision for the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through policy and strategy development and providing training for housing staff that work with victims, survivors and perpetrators.

We understand the serious and enduring impact which can be caused by domestic abuse. Therefore, identifying domestic abuse early and providing support to victims and survivors is a key priority for Housing. This will support us to prevent homelessness and improve the safety and wellbeing of tenants.

- 1.2 The policy aims to:
- Protect and support survivors of domestic abuse, including children recognised as victims in their own right.
 - Provide clear procedures for staff to identify, assess, and respond to domestic abuse.
 - Ensure safe and sustainable housing options for survivors.
 - Hold perpetrators accountable through appropriate tenancy management and legal remedies.
 - Strengthen partnership working with police, social care, and specialist domestic abuse services.
 - Ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and other relevant legislation.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This document is for all front-line council staff who may deal with cases of domestic abuse or facilitate disclosures of domestic abuse. This policy is also for Stevenage Borough Council tenants and for any tenant accessing safe accommodation through Survivors against Domestic Abuse. The purpose of the policy is to:
- Protect victims and survivors of domestic abuse and prevent homelessness by providing safe and secure accommodation to Stevenage tenants and those who approach the borough for housing assistance.

- Provide early intervention to tackle domestic abuse and prevent further abuse and facilitate the necessary help and support for victims and survivors and their children
- Hold perpetrators to account for their actions in a way that is prompt, decisive and proportionate, with a focus on rehabilitation and maintaining the safety of the victim and survivor and their children
- Support the delivery of the priorities within Hertfordshire's VAWG Strategy.

Responsible officers include, but are not limited to:

- Housing Management staff
- Tenancy Sustainment Officers
- Anti-Social Behaviour Officers
- Safeguarding Leads
- Repairs and Property Services staff (where safety measures are required)

Those impacted include:

- Tenants
- Applicants for housing
- Household members
- Leaseholders (where relevant to safeguarding)
- Staff involved in responding to domestic abuse disclosures

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to support people affected by domestic abuse under the following legislation:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR

Stevenage Borough Council's Housing department adopts the Government's definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

This policy will align with the VAWG Strategy but will also build on the strategy by outlining the housing specific policy approach for tackling domestic abuse and support victims and survivors, while holding perpetrators to account.

4. Equalities

- 4.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this policy, the council will carry out its functions in a way that:
- Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
 - Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't
 - Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

5. Data Protection

- 5.1 The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful careful treatment of personal information as very important to delivery of services.

The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Council's approach to handling information please see [Data Protection Act \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk)

6. Policy

- 6.1 Domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness, tenancy breakdown, and safeguarding risk. SBC recognises that housing providers play a critical role in identifying abuse early and supporting survivors to remain safe in their homes or move to alternative accommodation. Domestic abuse may come to the attention of staff through direct disclosures and by way of potential indicators such as a higher-than-average number of repairs, presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse, abandoned properties, anti-social behaviour complaints and noise nuisance. Housing staff are well placed to recognise domestic abuse as abuse often takes place in the home environment. Housing staff should therefore be able to recognise the signs and respond appropriately and signpost to SADA if someone experiencing abuse asks for advice and support.

Staff are expected to:

- Recognise domestic abuse in all its forms, including coercive control and economic abuse.

- Treat children who witness domestic abuse as victims in their own right.
- Ensure survivors are not disadvantaged in housing allocations or tenancy management.
- Share information appropriately for safeguarding purposes.
- Provide staff with training to identify and respond to domestic abuse.

The Housing department in partnership with Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) will raise awareness amongst staff and improve our ability to identify cases of abuse by:

Identifying domestic abuse

Staff will be trained to recognise indicators such as:

- Physical injuries or signs of distress
- Frequent repairs or damage to the home
- Rent arrears linked to financial control
- Reports from neighbours
- A partner dominating conversations or preventing access

Safeguarding responsibilities

All staff must follow SBC safeguarding procedures. Concerns about children or vulnerable adults will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review programme. Any feedback from residents or staff on the implementation of this policy and amendments in response to changes in legislation or service provision will be kept under regular review by the Head of Community Advice and Support.

8. References and Resources

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- SBC Safeguarding Policy
- SBC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (2022)
- SBC Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024)
- Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership guidance
- Making Stevenage Even Better (2024–2027)

9. Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
SADA	Survivors Against Domestic Abuse

10. Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
03.03.26	Reviewed & added onto new template	Melissa Cucos