

# Domestic Abuse Policy

## March 2019

### 1 Policy statement

- 1.1 Rooftop's mission is to support our customers to have successful lives and one of the key objectives is to meet the housing needs of communities.
- 1.2 We believe that our customers should not live in fear of violence, abuse or harassment from a partner, former partner or any member of their household or family. This policy sets out Rooftop's commitment to assisting customers and applicants who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.
- 1.3 Domestic abuse is still a largely hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or relationship status.
- 1.4 As a housing provider, Rooftop is well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. We will take all reports seriously and work pro-actively with survivors to offer support. In addition, we will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance. We will use the appropriate tools and powers where a breach of tenancy exists.
- 1.5 We will work pro-actively with partner agencies to promote awareness, challenge attitudes and improve the response to domestic abuse.

### 2 Regulatory requirement

- 2.1 Whilst there is no specific reference to Domestic abuse in the consumer standards, the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenancy Standard contains specific information around allocations and mutual exchange. The Standard states that "Registered Providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way", and 'Registered providers shall co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function, and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nomination agreements.' This may be particularly pertinent when local authorities are discharging their homelessness duty to those affected by domestic abuse.

### 3 Definition

- 3.1 Rooftop has adopted the Government's definition of domestic abuse as being:  
"any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."
- 3.2 Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
  - Psychological and/or emotional abuse
  - Physical or sexual abuse, including rape
  - Financial abuse
  - Harassment and stalking
  - Online or digital abuse
- 3.3 Whilst domestic abuse exists primarily as part of violence against women and girls including different forms of family violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called “honour crimes”, Rooftop recognises that domestic abuse is also experienced by men and will offer appropriate support in all cases.
- 3.4 As a provider of older person’s housing, we recognise the detrimental effect on wellbeing that elder abuse can bring. The Care Act 2014 specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a key part of a person’s wellbeing and we recognise that abuse may take numerous forms.
- 3.5 Rooftop will adopt the definition in “Call to end violence against women and girls strategy in November 2010” which extend the remit to include those aged 16-17 and in 2012, further extended to include coercive control.
- 3.6 Domestic abuse takes the form of power and control exerted on one party by the other party. Children are affected by domestic abuse too and this raises domestic abuse as a child protection issue.
- 3.7 Rooftop recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity and we are committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse.
- 3.8 Domestic abuse is a complex issue and we will work with our partners to support victims and deal with the perpetrators as domestic abuse cases require a multi-agency approach.
- 3.9 Rooftop takes domestic abuse seriously and is committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance. Domestic abuse ‘champions’ within Rooftop staff will provide additional guidance and advice whenever necessary. Rooftop employs a Domestic Abuse team contracted to Worcestershire but can still offer advice to any customer. The team are committed to providing floating support to clients, management of ‘safe houses’, provision of support programmes and work in partnership with Women’s Aid to deliver the services.
- 3.10 Rooftop will act to promote awareness of domestic abuse both publicly and professionally, participate in appropriate campaigns and will pro-actively review and drive performance. We will work together with colleagues and our partner agencies to ensure this continues.
- 3.11 We will provide appropriate and regular training for staff to recognise, report and deal with domestic abuse effectively. Information on domestic abuse and the help available will form part of the staff induction process.
- 3.12 As a responsible landlord, we aim to protect the housing status of those at risk and give appropriate support either directly or via signposting to appropriate agencies.

We will ensure confidentiality and respect the wishes of the survivor. We will assist with additional security measures as needed and act outside our normal repairing policy as necessary and appropriate in certain circumstances. This may include works carried out as emergency, required as a result of violent incidents.

- 3.13 We aim to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are aware of the options and support available to them so that they can make informed decisions about the route they wish to take to end the abuse and rebuild their lives. This will include the provision of appropriate advice about their housing options and about their legal rights and responsibilities regarding their tenancy.
- 3.14 We will work in partnership with legal, statutory and voluntary services to ensure that support is provided in a co-ordinated way. Rooftop staff will ensure that they only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the customer concerned, unless:
- The information is necessary for the protection of children.
  - We are required by law, for example as part of a criminal investigation.
- 3.15 We will ensure that all new and existing residents are aware that Domestic abuse is a criminal offence and a breach of the terms of their tenancy agreement.

#### **4 Review**

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are major changes in legislation or good practice.

#### **5 Consultation**

- |                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| 5.1 Leadership Team        | March 2019 |
| 5.2 Executive Team         | March 2019 |
| 5.3 Other (e.g. customers) |            |

#### **6 Responsibilities**

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 6.1 <b>Responsible body</b>                    | Executive Team                    |
| 6.2 Formulation and approval of policy         | Executive Team                    |
| Amendments to policy                           | Head of Neighbourhoods and Income |
| Monitoring of policy                           | Leadership Team                   |
| Operational management of policy/policy author | Head of Neighbourhoods and Income |
| 6.3 <b>Date of formulation of policy</b>       | March 2019                        |
| 6.4 <b>Dates of policy reviews</b>             | March 2022                        |

**Associated documents**

Internal – Rooftop policies and procedures

- Allocations and Tenancy policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Safeguarding policy

External

- ‘Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse’, Consultation Response and Draft Bill, January 2019
- Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020
- Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard