

# Domestic Abuse Policy

# Contents

## Contents

|                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction .....                                          | 3  |
| 2. Domestic abuse definition.....                              | 3  |
| 3. Policy scope and objectives.....                            | 4  |
| 4. Legislation .....                                           | 5  |
| 5. What this policy aims to do .....                           | 7  |
| 6. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) considerations..... | 9  |
| 7. Enforcement and holding perpetrators to account .....       | 10 |
| 8. Multi agency partnerships .....                             | 11 |
| 9. Prevention and Awareness .....                              | 12 |
| 10. Feedback, consultation, approval and review .....          | 12 |

# 1. Introduction

Canterbury City Council (CCC) firmly believes that no one should live in fear of abuse and violence.

Domestic abuse is a crime and it is never the fault of the person experiencing abuse.

We use the government's definition of domestic abuse which encompasses many behaviours beyond physical abuse.

Canterbury City Council recognises that domestic abuse is prevalent and under-reported, and that some victims/ survivors may face additional barriers which prevent them from informing someone about the abuse they are facing.

## 2. Domestic abuse definition

Domestic abuse is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviours.

Domestic abuse is between:

- those that are aged 16 and over, who are / or have been in an intimate relationship
- are family members
- or have a parental relationship in relation to the same child

For full definition please visit [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/26/parts/1).

CCC recognises that some people face additional barriers and issues in seeking help due to their ethnic background, gender, disability, religion, age or sexual orientation,

which makes them feel particularly vulnerable when seeking help or talking about their situation.

CCC undertakes Equality Impact Assessments of all major decisions and takes action to implement changes. This is necessary to ensure that council services and policies consider the diverse needs of its service users and residents.

Domestic abuse can be any of the following behaviours, between those aged 16 and over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- discriminatory abuse
- online or digital abuse
- economic/financial abuse
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- violent, threatening behaviour, psychological, emotional or other abuse.
- so-called honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Coercive and controlling behaviours underpins domestic abuse and is explained as:

Controlling behaviour is a range of purposeful behaviours including intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse and manipulation. Which are designed to make you feel controlled, humiliated, scared and frightened of the abuser. These behaviours are repeated and designed by a perpetrator to make a victim subordinate and/or dependent. This can be by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain or depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Controlling or coercive behaviours are repeatedly used for the perpetrator to achieve power and control over a victim and make the victim entirely dependent on the abuser. In an abusive relationship these behaviours reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse.

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. Personally connected is defined as people who:

- are married to each other.
- are civil partners of each other.
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place).
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other such as carers.
- have another form of personal relationship with each other, such as carers
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- are relatives

Children aged under 18 years are recognised as victims/survivors in their own right. This includes if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator. This policy emphasises existing safeguarding procedures to protect children from further risk of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime, which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality

between women and men. It can occur within intimate relationships whether that be heterosexual or LGBTQIA+. Also this can occur between family members whether this be close family members or extended relatives.

Domestic abuse is cruel, complex and can affect anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, social class or disability.

Some people experience other forms of oppression and discrimination such as honour-based violence or forced marriage and may face further barriers to disclosing abuse and seeking help.

### 3. Policy scope and objectives

This policy applies to tenants/residents and anyone living in Canterbury City Council (CCC).

We have a separate policy for staff experiencing domestic abuse.

The policy has been developed in consultation with residents and partner agencies. This policy sets out the council's responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

- Raises awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families.
- The Act further improves the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- Strengthens the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

- The Domestic Abuse Act introduced two new civil protection orders, that are intended to provide protection from all forms of domestic abuse. These are Domestic Abuse Protections Notices (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO).

More information regarding these orders can be found at:

[Domestic violence protection orders - GOV.UK](#)

## 4. Legislation

This policy supports the following UK legislation:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Clare's Law (2017) (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- FGM Act 2003
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Linked Policies

This policy is linked to the following Canterbury City Council policies:

- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Community Safety Partnership Plan
- Data Protection Policy
- Kent and Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing (Duty to Act) Policy
- Staff Domestic Abuse Policy
- VAWG Strategy / Tackle VAWG Strategy

### Legal Duties

In addition, Canterbury City Council recognises its legal duties and obligations to all residents under the following legislations:

- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Family Law Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Public Order Act 1986 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Forced Marriage \(Civil Protection\) Act 2007 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Housing Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Civil Partnership Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

- [Homelessness Act 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/56)
- [Criminal Justice Act 2003 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/44)
- [Data Protection Act 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12)
- [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/16)

In accordance with the Care Act 2014, the council has a legal duty to share information with the appropriate agency where there are serious concerns with a person's health or safety.

CCC will inform the victim/survivor experiencing domestic abuse about what the council will do with their data.

Consent will always be sought from the victim/survivor but in cases where there is a significant risk of harm, the Safeguarding Policy will be adhered to.

CCC will always take into account someone's ability to be able to consent under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Also, consideration will be undertaken to explore inherent jurisdiction if capacity is limited due to significant control and coercion by another.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 authorises the disclosure of information to, and requested information from, relevant authorities to work reduce crime and disorder and protect a vulnerable person.

### **Other Considerations**

Incidents of domestic abuse are common and critically affect many people's lives.

An estimated 2.2 million females (9.1%) and 1.5 million males (6.5%) experienced domestic abuse in the last year were recorded in the year ending March 2025 (ONS, 2025).

CCC promotes the view that everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form and that domestic abuse is wholly unacceptable and inexcusable.

Our approach is to support anyone affected by all forms of domestic abuse and to respond to any disclosures of abuse sensitively, listening to the wishes of the individual and looking at ways to reduce risk and further abuse.

CCC will continue this by raising awareness of domestic abuse and how obtain support / help.

CCC recognises domestic abuse is a serious issue and a crime.

We will take all forms of domestic abuse seriously and we are committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone who approaches us for help in cases of domestic abuse.

CCC are a White Ribbon accredited organisation. The White Ribbon is a globally recognised symbol to end men's violence against women and girls. White Ribbon represents men taking responsibility, to challenge this issue and be allies, every day, to stop violence against women and girls before it starts. The three year action plan that supports the accreditation is a priority for CCC and is related to the reduction of domestic abuse within the district.

Nationally this policy will support the government's vision for the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and adheres to the principles of Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA's) mission to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through policy.

## 5. What this policy aims to do

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 30th April 2021. This led to the introduction and enhancing of duties placed on local authorities in their response to domestic abuse and the impact upon victims and their children.

This Act formally recognised children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, due to the impact experiencing domestic abuse can have on them. Canterbury City Council already has established relationships with partner agencies to enhance our response in these adverse circumstances.

The Act places a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.

This establishes new protections in the family and civil courts for survivors for domestic abuse cases.

A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing under the provision of a homeless application. Should a victim of domestic abuse need to flee from a secure tenancy they will be offered an alternative secure tenancy in social housing.

This policy sets out our commitment, zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse, support offered to victims/survivors of domestic abuse and our approach to dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The purpose of this policy and its associated procedures is to set out how CCC will respond

to cases of domestic abuse, support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and hold perpetrators to account.

It sets out our commitment to take effective action to deal with all reports of domestic abuse.

It explains how we provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with specialised agencies to provide a coordinated response.

It aims to complement and work in parallel with relevant safeguarding statutory guidance, policies and procedures.

We aim to support and improve the safety of tenants, residents, leaseholders or clients who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse and prevent further incidents where possible.

When it does occur, we will take a collaborative, empathetic and survivor-led approach.

This policy will look to enhance CCC's response to domestic abuse in the following ways:

- intervene early to address domestic abuse and prevent further abuse.
- swiftly and decisively hold perpetrators to account for their actions with a focus on rehabilitation and maintaining the safety of the victim/survivors.
- fulfil and deliver the aims of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) framework.
- protect and provide sufficient support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse including signposting and referrals to appropriate agencies.
- adopt a trauma-informed approach.

## If you are experiencing domestic abuse

**In case of immediate danger, you should always call the police on 999.**

The Silent Solution system enables a 999 mobile caller who is too scared to make a noise or speak, **to press 55 when prompted** – this informs police that the caller is in a genuine emergency.

Tell your social worker, support worker, GP or any other professional who may be supporting you.

Rising Sun Domestic Abuse Service can provide support to victims of domestic abuse who can be reached on **01227 452 852** or by visiting [www.risingsunkent.com](http://www.risingsunkent.com)

Refuge provides the National Domestic Abuse Helpline **0808 2000 247** which can be reached 24 hours a day.

If you are a tenant, resident, leaseholder or client of Canterbury City Council, you can contact Housing Services.

We will offer support and advice, provide practical help and be sensitive and understanding when we discuss your options.

For any queries from Canterbury City Council tenants or leaseholders please contact **01227 862 142** or **01227 862 000** between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Council tenants can contact the service in writing on **generaltenancyenquiries@canterbury.gov.uk**

For requests for a homeless applications contact can be made via our housing switchboard on **01227 862 000** between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Alternatively

contact can be made on our triage line on **0808 196 8140** between 1pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If you wish to make a homeless application in person approaches can be made to Canterbury City Council's office at 14 Rose Lane, Canterbury, CT1 2ST which are open between 10am to 2pm Monday to Friday.

Alternatively requests for a homeless application can be made online by visiting Kent Home Choice and selecting Canterbury City Council as the district council you wish to approach.

### Home - [Kent HomeChoice](#)

Outside of office hours contact can be made to your Central Control Team on **01227 781 879**.

CCC are committed to working to end domestic abuse and violence and our staff are trained to deal with domestic abuse.

Do not make any immediate decisions such as giving up your tenancy until you have received advice.

- We recognise that survivors are never responsible for domestic abuse. We will take action to minimise the safety concerns and risks posed by the perpetrator whilst working alongside the survivor and considering their views, opinion, what they want to happen and the best way to manage risk.
- We understand not every victim/survivor will want to end their relationship or will want us to take enforcement action against the perpetrator. We will, therefore, manage risk, taking victim's wishes into account and ensure that as many safeguards are in place as possible.

## 6. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) considerations

CCC is dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing, health and safety of all who use our services.

We recognise domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Religion
- Class
- Age
- Sexuality
- Disability
- Lifestyle

This policy will take into account protected characteristics of victims and their children. Whilst also acknowledging that domestic abuse can be more prevalent within certain groups and that they may experience more barriers in accessing support.

Staff are aware to have a intersectional approach when assisting victims of domestic abuse. Which takes into account different cultural and religious practices. We look to ensure our services are accessible and inclusive and interpreting services can be provided if required.

Domestic abuse can manifest itself in different ways within different communities and at different times in people's lives. For instance pregnancy or the recent birth of a child can increase the risk of domestic abuse.

CCC recognises men can also be victims of domestic abuse. However, domestic abuse disproportionately impacts women. The council has a zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of domestic abuse.

Victims with multiple disadvantages such as from minority communities face additional barriers in disclosing or seeking support for domestic abuse.

CCC understands the need for an intersectional approach and that certain characteristics or vulnerabilities will mean that some people are more likely to experience harm caused by domestic abuse.

Intersectionality recognises victims/survivors' experiences of domestic abuse are in part defined by their race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and other intersecting needs and characteristics.

Victims/survivors of domestic abuse will experience overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantaged based on the combination of identities and their experiences. Which are often seen as significant barriers to accessing support.

We always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in an empathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way regarding of a victim's background.

CCC take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and have a clear commitment to regularly train staff to respond to disclosures and undertake appropriate action to reduce further incidents and risks.

## Staff Training

Staff have attended briefings and training regarding domestic abuse and intersectionality and are aware of sensitivity and cultural practices. Due to the prevalence of domestic abuse there is a staff policy to support staff who experience these concerns. Managers are given briefings and training to treat any disclosures appropriately and sensitively.

Awareness training through e-learning will be adopted as part of our corporate induction for all staff which will periodically be refreshed every year.

In order to further boost our response to Domestic Abuse we have a number of Domestic Abuse Champions within frontline housing teams to provide further support and guidance. The DA Champions have received advanced training in assessing and helping victims of domestic abuse and can provide additional support to all staff where required.

Through training and our DA Champions network staff will be aware of the signs of domestic abuse and how to respond to these concerns, record appropriately and refer to support as appropriate. Also staff will be confident in completing risk identification, information sharing and general safeguarding. This is further reinforced within CCC's existing safeguarding policies and procedures.

In order to protect victim survivors of domestic abuse staff will look to collaborate with partner agencies such as Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and other support services. CCC is committed to seeking consent from victim survivors to make relevant referrals for safeguarding and to aid in a coordinated community response.

Staff are aware that in order to support victims of domestic abuse a coordinated community response is best practice to prevent and protect against further incidents.

Training will be provided by local IDVA services to enable staff to respond to the needs and wishes of victims of domestic abuse within the community.

Anyone who is experiencing, at risk of experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse should be able to raise this with the council without fear of stigmatisation and be provided with sufficient and appropriate support.

## 7. Enforcement and holding perpetrators to account

Perpetrating domestic abuse will be taken extremely seriously. This policy CCC are adopting is to enhance existing support for victim/survivors of domestic abuse and their children. It is imperative to acknowledge that perpetrators of abuse must also be identified and held to account for their behaviour.

CCC's general approach to dealing with the perpetrator will be in accordance with DAHA's Perpetrator Management Toolkit. The safety of victims and survivors and their children will be central to the council's approach to holding the perpetrator to account.

When staff identify perpetrators of domestic abuse, information sharing with appropriate agencies will take place to ensure that suitable action is taken. This is to safeguard the victim and to prevent further incidents of abuse. Any

actions undertaken will account for the victim/survivor's wishes and considerations for their own safety.

Perpetrators are encouraged to access support to recognise, address and stop their abusive behaviour at the earliest opportunity. If a perpetrator refuses to engage with help and support but continues to commit abusive behaviour, the council will escalate early intervention or take legal action if this is within breach of a tenancy agreement held by the council.

CCC will work alongside partner agencies to explore options for local provision to be in place for perpetrators in order to access support to address their behaviour. Where possible staff will seek to promote these services to perpetrators as appropriate.

For perpetrators who wish to change their behaviour, support can be accessed via:

Respect Helpline confidentially on  
**0808 802 4040.**

KentCDAP Male domestic abuse programme  
(East Kent) **07955 039 703.**

## 8. Multi agency partnerships

Partnership working is crucial to effectively respond to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

The needs of individuals - including victims/survivors their children and awareness of risk from the perpetrator are multi-dimensional and interlinked. To support victims and prevent further risk an multi agency approach

is seen as best practice protect and prevent further incidents.

This involves us collaborating with other agencies that may have a role to play in supporting victims/survivors, including children, and holding perpetrators to account. This can include, for example, police, child social care, housing, health, IDVA and specialist services.

This policy will strengthen existing partnerships and enhance signposting to other services who can provide additional guidance and support.

CCC are aware of data protection policies and will look to share information with a victim's consent. Although it is acknowledged at times this will need to be completed without consent of the individual due to safeguarding concerns for victim and vulnerable adults. In these case CCC will following the following guidance:

### **Concerning adults at risk:**

[kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/kent\\_and\\_medway\\_multi-agency\\_safeguarding\\_adults\\_policy\\_procedures\\_and\\_practitioner\\_guidance.pdf](https://kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/kent_and_medway_multi-agency_safeguarding_adults_policy_procedures_and_practitioner_guidance.pdf)

### **Concerning children:**

[Kent and Medway safeguarding children procedures and strategies - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership](https://kscmp.org.uk/Kent_and_Medway_safeguarding_children_procedures_and_strategies_-_Kent_Safeguarding_Children_Multi-Agency_Partnership)  
([kscmp.org.uk](https://kscmp.org.uk))

### **Community Safety Partnership (CSP)**

The Canterbury Community Safety Partnership plays a key role in coordinating the local multi-agency response to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. The Partnership brings together statutory

agencies, including Kent Police, Kent County Council, health partners, probation services, housing providers and voluntary sector organisations to identify emerging issues, share information lawfully, and develop joint approaches to prevention, safeguarding and victim support. Through its strategic leadership, the CSP supports the delivery of local action plans, promotes awareness campaigns, monitors community safety priorities and works to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation whilst improving outcomes for victims, survivors and their families. The Partnership also supports initiatives aimed at addressing perpetrator behaviour and strengthening early intervention opportunities across the district

## 9. Prevention and Awareness

CCC will look for opportunities to prevent the occurrence of domestic abuse in order to protect victims and their children. Opportunities to achieve this will be through enhanced partnership working to stop incidents occurring in the first place.

This policy looks to enhance existing prevention work already being completed within the district.

CCC are a White Ribbon accredited organisation which will further enhance opportunities to stop the spread of domestic abuse and challenge this behaviour within the district. CCC will support work completed by key stakeholders and other partners who are promoting the prevention and escalation of domestic abuse.

On a national scale this preventive work will highlight key principles within the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), CCC will contribute towards the prevention and awareness of this topic by providing supporting information and publicity within the community and how to access support. Staff will receive ongoing training in order to look for opportunities to prevent the occurrence and escalation of domestic abuse within the community.

## 10. Feedback, consultation, approval and review

This policy is a commitment to prevent and protect victims of domestic abuse and will take on feedback from residents and stakeholders to improve our response.

It will be reviewed on a three yearly basis and will consider any feedback from staff, stakeholders and residents alike.

We work with our local Resident Engagement Panel (REP) to ensure we deliver the best housing service to our tenants.

Consideration will be given to any changes in legislation or policy. This will include survivor's voices who have been directly affected by domestic abuse.

This policy will be adapted to any future legislation that has a direct impact upon this policy.

