



# DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Citizen recognises the impact that domestic abuse has on our customers, our staff, families and neighbourhoods. It is a widespread problem that cannot be ignored. It is unacceptable, and we will promote the understanding that everyone has the right to live free from violence and abuse in any form and the responsibility for the violence and abuse lies with the perpetrator.

Citizen will strive to create a working environment that promotes this view and help those involved in or experiencing domestic abuse. We will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to provide support and advice to customers affected by such abuse.

This policy should be read in conjunction with both our Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children and ASB and Hate Crime policies.

Citizen also works in partnership with several partners who manage specific domestic abuse services including the provision of supportive accommodation on our behalf under Management Agreements.

## 2. Scope

### 2.1 Definition

The Home Office defines domestic abuse as;

“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, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.”

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member. The definition includes so called ‘honour-based violence’, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and is clear that it can occur in all domestic situations, regardless of the race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, mental or physical ability of those involved.

#### **POLICY**

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#### **[Domestic Abuse]**

Lead Officer: Director of Housing

Page 1 of 5

Approved at: ELT

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This policy extends to all operational areas and applies to Citizen customers, members of their household, and Citizen staff.

### 3. Policy detail

#### 3.1 Policy overview

This policy sets out how we will deal with domestic abuse by following the key principles as set out below;

- **Listen** – we will always listen to those experiencing domestic abuse and place their needs at the centre of our approach
- **Ask and act** – we will ask the right questions safely and ensure we act appropriately
- **Specialist support** – we will know when and how to refer to local specialist services
- **Tools** – we will provide clear procedures, roles, information and training to our staff

#### 3.2 Reporting

Anyone who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse can report the issue, in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically and confidentially.

We will ensure that reporting is as straightforward as possible and can be done in a variety of ways including; phone, email, online, in writing or in person.

We will treat those experiencing domestic abuse with respect and dignity. We will believe their disclosure and ensure they are given priority advice and assistance in a non-judgemental, empathetic and supportive way.

We will take all allegations seriously; deal with them sensitively and in confidence unless there is a legal obligation to disclose information to statutory services. We will not judge those experiencing domestic abuse, and we will ensure that our response and actions focus on their needs.

#### 3.3 Action

We will work with those experiencing domestic abuse and be guided by them to ensure that we take the most appropriate action for that individual, decisions will be made on a case by case basis. We will also consider the severity of the abuse, any criminality and inclusion of children within the household.

#### **POLICY**

Version: 1.0

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#### **[Domestic Abuse]**

Lead Officer: Director of Housing

Page 2 of 5

Approved at: ELT

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We will work alongside other agencies and make referrals, including Safeguarding where appropriate.

Our priority will always be the safety of those experiencing domestic abuse including their family. We will liaise with other agencies to provide the most suitable option, including, where appropriate improved security to the home and whether it is appropriate for them to remain there.

We will agree an action plan with those experiencing domestic abuse which will include how and when we will keep in contact, any support needs they may have, helping to manage expectations and set out our intention as to how we manage the case.

Any action taken will be in consultation with those experiencing domestic abuse as far as possible. The primary consideration of any intervention taken by us is to reduce the risk to those experiencing domestic abuse and others. Legal action will not be undertaken where this is likely to increase the risk to those experiencing domestic abuse, the decision will be taken in conjunction with other appropriate agencies.

The action that we can take will also depend upon the tenure of those experiencing domestic abuse and the perpetrator, i.e. who is the tenant. Our tenancy and licence management policy outlines options that staff have available to them in further detail.

Where those experiencing domestic abuse, and the perpetrator have a joint tenancy and we are unable to intervene to decide which party should occupy the property, we will refer those experiencing domestic abuse to obtain independent legal advice on their options, which may include:

- Seeking an occupation order
- A court order to transfer the tenancy to their sole name
- One of the tenants signs a notice to quit; ending the tenancy

Where the perpetrator is the tenant and they remain in the family home, we may take court action to get possession of the property providing that we have the required evidence. We will give regard to those experiencing domestic abuse and any children as to their housing need. We may initiate legal action against the perpetrator in accordance with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy.

Where the perpetrator is not a tenant, we will refer those experiencing domestic abuse to access appropriate support to increase their safety and seek advice on taking legal action.

## **POLICY**

Version: 1.0

Date: Oct 2020

## **[Domestic Abuse]**

Lead Officer: Director of Housing

Page 3 of 5

Approved at: ELT

Date of review: Oct 2023

UNCONTROLLED WHEN PRINTED



### **3.4 Partnership Working**

We may not always be the most appropriate agency to deal with abuse, we will work closely with other support agencies to ensure the most effective and swift response for those experiencing domestic abuse.

### **3.5 Information sharing**

We will treat all disclosures of domestic abuse confidentially. However, there may be circumstances in which we have a duty to disclose information given to us for example involving the Safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults. Where possible we will discuss the information sharing process with the person involved prior to sharing. Our Safeguarding policy contains further information.

### **3.6 Support**

We will ensure that a range of public awareness materials are available and visible to customers so that everyone is aware of the support available to them.

## **4. Roles and responsibility**

It is the responsibility of ELT to ensure that this policy is successfully implemented, and the procedures followed. Directors are responsible for ensuring that all staff understand the importance of this policy and the related procedures and comply with them. It is essential to the implementation of this policy that staff know how to deal with emergencies and to express concerns to the appropriate person in the organisation.

## **5. Monitoring and review**

We will provide relevant training, capacity building and support across all levels of the organisation (including staff, board and partners) that supports the delivery of targeted action/ service improvement for domestic abuse. The level of training they receive will be considered in proportion to the role within the organisation, clients they work with and risk they are potentially dealing with.

We will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that contractors who work in properties on behalf of Citizen and who come into contact with those experiencing domestic abuse are aware of and have had training on this policy and the related procedure.



Everyone working on behalf of Citizen is expected to behave towards those experiencing domestic abuse and staff in a way that demonstrates their commitment to this policy. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action or termination of contracts.

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum every three years, or earlier due to:

- significant changes to legislation or regulation;
- deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations

## 6. Equality impact assessment

An equality analysis has been carried out and shows that this policy has or has the potential to have a positive impact on all individuals regardless of their protected characteristic as per the Equality Act 2010.

## 7. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Amendments	Approved at/by	Review
1.0	Oct 2020	Policy Review	ELT	Oct 2023
[Version]	[date]	[amend made]	[name	[date]

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Version: 1.0

Date: Oct 2020

### [Domestic Abuse]

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Page 5 of 5

Approved at: ELT

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