



Domestic Violence Abuse Policy

Contents

	Section	Page Number
1.	Background	4
2.	Purpose and scope of the policy	4
3.	Policy statement and aims	5
4.	Legislation and guidance	6
5.	Definitions of Domestic Abuse	6
6.	Consultation	7
7.	Responsibilities	7
8.	Confidentiality	8
9.	Use of tools and powers	8
10.	Sanctuary Scheme	8
11.	Housing needs	9
12.	Our Partners	9
13.	Performance monitoring and review	10
14.	Training and awareness	10
15.	Links to other policies	11
16.	Complaints	11
17.	Useful contacts	11
18.	Appendices	13-19

1. Background

- 1.1 Every year, over 2 million people experience domestic abuse and this figure is rising. Domestic abuse is estimated to create housing costs of £160 million per year, even before taking into account issues such as debts left by the perpetrators in cases of financial abuse.
- 1.2 Doncaster's overall housing stock is over 112,000 with St Leger Homes managing approximately 20,000 or 18% of the overall housing stock
- 1.3 Between the 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, the Doncaster Domestic Abuse Hub received 1,858 referrals for specialised domestic abuse services. This was an increase of 80% on the previous year.

Of these, 1406 referrals were allocated to Doncaster Council's Independent Violence Advocate Services which is a specialised service for high risk victims. This is a 53% increase from the previous year. Out of these, 947 were linked to a St Leger Homes tenancy, representing 68% of the overall referrals into Doncaster domestic abuse services.

- 1.4 The above data is consistent with national trends in that women are significantly more likely to be victims of abuse, although increasingly men are coming forward and now equate to 11% of referrals.

St Leger Homes believes that individuals experiencing domestic abuse, whether being abused, being the abuser or witnessing abuse within the home environment, should have access to the support and services they need at the time they need it to be safe and recover or to address their behaviour.

2. Purpose and scope of the policy

- 2.1 This policy sets out our response to assisting and supporting individuals and families experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse and has been published following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in April 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>

- 2.2 The Domestic Abuse Act, together with other legislative changes over recent years means that there are now more legislation measures in place to protect individuals and families from harm.
- 2.3 Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 the Government has established the position of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner in law to provide accountability to the public and Ministers on failure within statutory service provision and poor practice services.
- 2.4 There is now a statutory definition of domestic abuse with both stalking and controlling behaviour now classed as criminal offences. Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) can

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 1 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

now be enforced against offenders to protect individuals from harm. Other measures detailed in the Act relate to the provision of accommodation with support to victims and their children residing in their homes or in temporary, refuge, dispersed and move on accommodation.

- 2.5 The role of St Leger Homes is essential in a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. A large proportion of our staff are in regular contact with our tenants and customers in a variety of settings and are often well-placed to identify signs and receive disclosures of domestic abuse and offer appropriate support. It is vitally important that they know precisely how to respond when a disclosure is made to them or where they have reason to believe abuse is taking place.
- 2.6 This policy applies to those members of staff directly employed by St Leger Homes and of whom St Leger Homes has a legal responsibility. For staff covered by a letter of authority/contract or work experience this policy is applicable whilst undertaking duties on behalf of St Leger Homes.
- 2.7 Alongside this policy, sits the Staff Domestic Abuse Policy.

3. Policy statement and aims

- 3.1 We are committed to supporting any person who is experiencing, or has been threatened with domestic abuse. We will work closely with our partner agencies both strategically and operationally to make sure that the victim, children and other household members receive the most effective support to address the issues, and that the perpetrator is dealt with effectively, including helping them get the support to address their behaviour.
- 3.2 It is the aim of St Leger Homes that our tenants and customers should not live in fear of violence, abuse or harassment from a partner, former partner, or any member of their household or family.
- 3.3 Our approach is twofold:
- Recognising the signs
 - Working with partners to respond to the issues

We will ensure our customers feel confident and able to report domestic abuse to us through a variety of methods, including telephone, online, face to face, social media and housing officer enquiries. We will investigate all reports that we receive and acknowledge receipt within in one working day via letter, text, telephone call or face to face visit.

All contacts are detailed and monitored within our management systems, with a 6 monthly review process.

- 3.4 Anyone reporting or experiencing domestic abuse to St Leger Homes will be treated in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgmental way. Any disclosure of abuse will be taken seriously, and advice and assistance will be given as a priority. In all of our actions, we will always put the feelings of the victim first and recognise the extreme sensitivity of investigating domestic abuse.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 2 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

- 3.5 As a member of Team Doncaster we will continue to work with our Partners across both statutory and voluntary sectors, to support victims with a flexible range of options in relation to their housing and support needs and where appropriate, take action against perpetrators where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing abuse.
- 3.6 We do recognise that in some circumstances the victim may need to be rehoused and in accordance with our Housing Allocation Policy, we support the victim and perpetrator to relocate if appropriate. Further guidance is being developed and introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to support local authorities with further powers to manage the risk of perpetrators within social housing. The Doncaster Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Protocol is to be launched in 2022.
- 3.7 St Leger Homes are part of and support an effective strategic approach in supporting survivors and families suffering financial, emotional or physical abuse.
- 3.8 St Leger Homes will remain an active participant and contributory partner to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), the Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination Group and the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements.
- 3.9 If abuse is reported to St Leger Homes before any other agency, we will carry out a Safe Lives DASH risk assessment to assess the level of risk. All staff are trained in awareness of domestic abuse as mandatory training and where it is relevant to the role, DASH and MARAC training is completed.
- 3.10 When dealing with domestic abuse full consideration will be given to our safeguarding responsibilities, details of which are included in St Leger Home's Safeguarding Children & Adults procedure.

4. Legislation and guidance

- 4.1 *Appendix 1* sets out the documents and associated policies/publications taken into account to develop this policy and help inform our approach to supporting those experiencing domestic abuse.

5. Definition of Domestic Abuse – the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- 5.1 The definition of Domestic Abuse has been updated following the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and states:

“Behaviour of a person towards another person is domestic abuse if these persons are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is ‘abusive’. Behaviour is abusive if it consists of (any of the following) physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse and it does not matter whether that behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.”

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 3 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

- 5.2 Domestic Abuse' can be prosecuted under a range of offences and the term is used to describe a range of controlling and coercive behaviours, used by one person to maintain control over another with whom they have, or have had, an intimate or family relationship. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has extended the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover any post-separation abuse.
- 5.3 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has also introduced a new standalone offence of non-fatal strangulation and threats to share intimate images is now a criminal offence and also includes, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages.
- 5.4 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 now explicitly recognises children as victims of Domestic Abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 As well as consulting with individuals who have experienced Domestic Abuse, consultation to inform the policy also included facilitating the following groups;
- Get Involved Focus Group
 - Young Persons Focus Group
 - Staff Focus Group
 - Survey Monkey questionnaires
 - different surveys were produced for staff, managers and customers
 - those surveyed included tenants and residents, young people and GIG members
- 6.2 The most detailed survey was the staff focus group, which identified information for St Leger Homes to act on. As a result of this consultation the following developments have been identified;
- More awareness training and advice on coercive and controlling behaviour
 - A re-brand and re-launch of the Safeguarding Single Point of Contact to 'Something's Not Right'
 - Greater promotion of the services that St Leger Homes and its partners offer to support people experiencing Domestic Abuse
 - Greater use of the domestic abuse champions to support the sharing of key messages and updates around domestic abuse
 - Improve the partnership approach to identify single point of contacts for staff to liaise with.

7 Responsibilities

- 7.1 Overall responsibility for implementing the Policy within St Leger Homes lies with the Chief Executive by ensuring that domestic abuse is recognised as a composite part of keeping our tenants and customers safe.
- 7.2 All staff who come into contact with customers by whatever means, are responsible for reporting any concerns in relation to safeguarding or if they believe that someone may be the victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 4 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

7.3 However, specific operational responsibilities are delegated to several areas of the organisation as set out at *Appendix 2*.

7.4 *Appendix 3* highlights the process that any domestic abuse case must take.

8 Confidentiality

8.1 Any disclosure of domestic abuse will be treated in the strictest confidence, unless we have a duty to disclose information in order to;

- Protect the victim
- Prevent harm to someone else, or
- Prevent or detect a crime

Individuals will be made aware of instances where we have a duty to disclose information.

9. Use of tools and powers

9.1 Domestic abuse is a clear breach of our Tenancy Agreement which states:

Section 2.3 Nuisance, Harassment, Antisocial Behaviour, Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Unlawful Activities.

2.3(c) Must not inflict domestic abuse, use or threaten violence or use financial, mental, emotional or sexual abuse against any member of your household. This can be direct or indirect and anything that interferes with the peace, comfort, convenience and enjoyment of others and includes the use of social media.

9.2 St Leger Homes will make use of appropriate tools and powers to sanction and support those who are perpetrators of domestic abuse, including injunctions, Notice of Seeking Possession, and possession proceedings.

9.3 Perpetrators of domestic abuse can access specialist support if they acknowledge their behaviour, want to change and consent to a referral being made.

9.4 We recognise that not every victim will want to end their relationship nor want St Leger Homes to take enforcement action against the perpetrator. It is important therefore, to manage risk appropriately and ensure that all reasonable safeguards are in place to protect the victim if they are not ready to walk away from the perpetrator.

9.5 As well as the tools and powers available to us, we will also work closely with partners to ensure a holistic approach to tackling domestic abuse and that the tools and powers available to these partner agencies are fully considered.

9.6 **Appendix 4** details some of the enforcement options available to our partners and wherever possible and appropriate St Leger Homes will assist and contribute to the Partnership obtaining orders to help reduce domestic abuse.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 5 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

10 Sanctuary Scheme

- 10.1 Whenever appropriate, housing requirements and suitable options will be discussed with those experiencing domestic abuse. We will make every effort to ensure that a safe environment is provided for them and their families and will work alongside specialist agencies to provide advice and assistance.
- 10.2 St Leger Homes operate the Sanctuary Scheme to enhance home security by providing extra locks, chains, window alarms and external lighting in order to provide some reassurance and peace of mind for people in their home. St Leger Homes will also make referrals to partner agencies, for example South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue can provide additional security such as lockable letterboxes and South Yorkshire Police can ensure a property is tagged for a priority response.

11 Housing Needs

- 11.1 A person experiencing domestic abuse may be able to remain in their own home, if it is safe to do so. However, there may be occasions where refuge or temporary accommodation is required whilst risk assessments are being made or appropriate safety measures put in place.
- 11.2 In these instances, discussions with our Housing Options colleagues as well as partners such as the police and the Council's domestic abuse hub will take place where the need for a temporary or a permanent move is identified.
- 11.3 We will also check the tenancy status of the victim and perpetrator and may need to seek legal advice for example where there is a joint tenancy or a sole tenancy in the name of the victim or perpetrator, to ensure the victim is receiving accurate and helpful advice for their situation, to help them make informed decisions.

12 Our Partners

- 12.1 St Leger Homes is a member of the Team Doncaster Strategic Partnership which is formally recognised as the strategic partnership of organisations and individuals spanning the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
- 12.2 The Team Doncaster Strategic Partnership currently oversees four thematic partnerships one of which is the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership which aims to reduce crime and disorder in our communities, helps to improve the quality of life for residents and contributes to the regeneration of Doncaster. Addressing Domestic Abuse is a priority for the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership and Team Doncaster.
- 12.3 We are committed to working collaboratively with other agencies to ensure the safety of all those who may be or have been the subject of domestic abuse. Our vision and philosophy of practice is to develop our whole family approach and integrated partnership working. As such, we are represented and contribute are involved and re

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 6 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

- 12.4 We work closely with the Domestic Abuse Hub. Partners in the Hub include Doncaster Council, Doncaster Children's Services Trust, Riverside and Phoenix WoMens Aid. The Domestic Abuse Hub consists of experienced, trained and knowledgeable workers supporting people out of abusive situations and into healthy and fulfilling lives. The domestic abuse workers provide practical and emotional support to victims and families.
- 12.5 The Police, who are the most appropriate body to take immediate action where there is or has been abuse or a fear of abuse and may apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) resulting in a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO).
- 12.6 Doncaster Children and Adult Safeguarding Board that works to empower and protect vulnerable children, young people and adults.
- 12.7 Doncaster Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) is a risk arrangement meeting where professionals share information on high risk domestic violence and abuse cases and put in place a risk management plan. Doncaster Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) where professionals work together to protect the public by managing the risk posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.
- 12.8 Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) a partnership approach to target the behaviour of serial domestic violence abuse perpetrators who are likely to cause harm, through interventions and disruption.
- 12.10 Domestic Homicide Review Panels (DHR) a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves.
- 12.11 We see our role as recognising the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse and working with our partners to improve the outcomes and wellbeing of adult victims, children and young people affected by domestic abuse and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

13 Performance monitoring and review

- 13.1 St Leger Homes staff receive a separate domestic abuse procedure guide, which gives them further detail and guidance on how to deal with reports or disclosures of domestic abuse.
- 13.2 We will monitor the number of domestic abuse cases which are reported on a monthly and quarterly basis, and will also regularly review our procedures to take into account any good practice, or any changes in legislation.
- 13.3 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years – unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

Training and awareness

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 7 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

14.
14.1 All staff complete the mandatory safeguarding training that includes the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse.

14.2 Through the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA) consultation process, it has been identified that certain sections of our workforce; particularly our frontline staff require more in-depth, bespoke training on domestic abuse. This training will include how to spot the signs of abuse, and how to deal appropriately with disclosures.

14.3 In addition, we are committed to training 20 'Champions' who will be located across the organisation, who will be confident in advising both staff and customers on domestic abuse issues.

Links to other policies and procedures

15
15.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following associated policies/publications:

- Antisocial Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Procedure
- Safeguarding Children and Adults Procedure
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Housing Options Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Equality and Diversity Policy.

16. Complaints

16.1 If a customer is unhappy about a decision in relation to this policy or any aspect of our management of domestic abuse, they can raise their concerns to any member of St Leger Homes staff and this will be responded to in accordance with St Leger Homes Complaints procedure.

17. Useful Contacts

- St Leger Homes 01302 862862
- Domestic Abuse Hub telephone 01302 737080
email dahub@doncaster.gov.uk
or complete our online self-referral form:
<https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/support-for-victims>

Outside of the office hours some helpful numbers are:

- National 24 Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247
- St. Leger homeless out of hours - 01302 736000
- Mental Health Crisis Team - 0800 804 8999

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 8 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

- Samaritans - call free on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org
- Doncaster Council also has a service for people that are no longer being abused but who would like someone to talk to and support them with dealing with the trauma that domestic abuse can cause. If you would like to speak to the Survivor Liaison Worker please email Laura at survivors@doncaster.gov.uk or visit it the survivor zone page for more information.
- In an emergency dial 999

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 9 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

Associated Policies & Publications

The following is a list of documents and associated policies/publications have been taken into account in developing this policy and has helped inform our current approach to supporting victims of domestic abuse:

- Housing Act 1988
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Police & Justice Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Care Act 2014
- Clare's Law/Domestic Abuse Offender Disclosure Scheme

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 10 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

Responsibilities

The specific roles of each team in delivering effective support for those reporting or experiencing domestic abuse is shown below.

Housing Management responsibilities include;

- Ensuring this policy is fit for purpose and relevant.
- Publicising the service and ensuring that there is good information for customers and staff to easily access.
- Providing a range of ways that customers can access the services available, such as, phone, post, email, internet and my SLHD app.
- Ensure that all staff know about domestic abuse and are trained to respond as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility.
- The Area Housing Teams to investigate reports or disclosures of domestic abuse and ensure that the appropriate safeguards are put in place for the victim.
- Enforcement action against the perpetrator where appropriate depending on the needs and wishes of the victim).
- Work in partnership with Doncaster Council, South Yorkshire Police, charities and support providers to ensure the best outcome for all.

Access to Homes Teams responsibilities include:

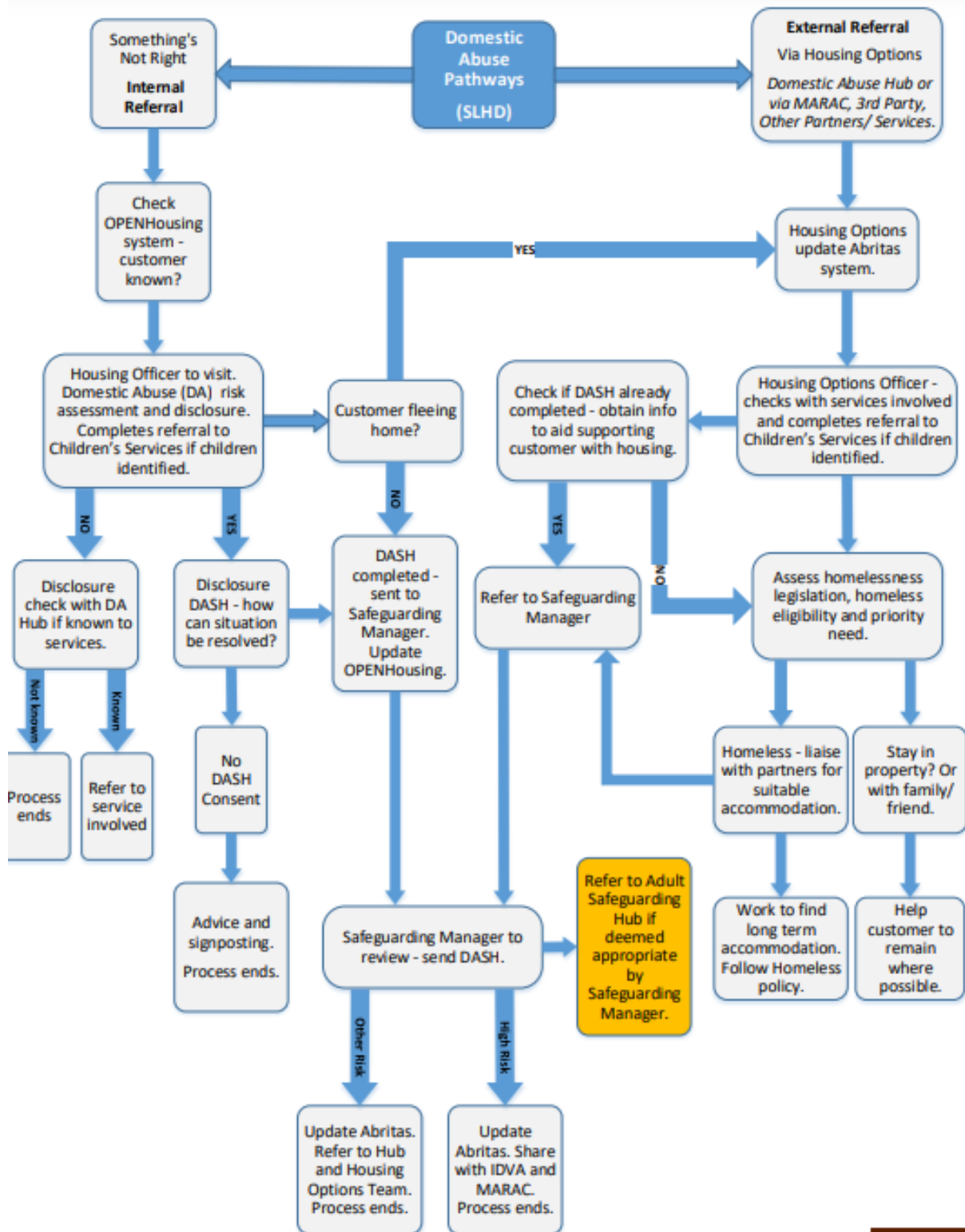
- Providing homelessness services to people who have experienced domestic abuse or are at risk of domestic abuse including sourcing temporary accommodation and support if required.
- Assessing the housing need of an individual experiencing domestic abuse based on the information supplied and awarding appropriate housing priority.

Property Services responsibilities include:

- Completing Safe & Secure work as a priority on request (Sanctuary scheme).

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 11 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

Process of Domestic Abuse



Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 12 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders

If the police have a reasonable belief that domestic abuse has occurred, they are able to serve the perpetrator with a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) as the first step to acquiring a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO).

A DVPO can prevent a perpetrator from returning to a residence, and from having contact with the victim, for up to 28 days. This allows the victim some time to consider their options, and to engage with some support.

Getting a DVPO is a two-step process:

On being called to an incident of domestic abuse, if the police have reasonable grounds to believe the victim remains at risk of domestic abuse, they can choose to issue an emergency non-molestation and eviction notice - the DVPN. Because the DVPN is a police-issued notice, it is effective from the time of issue, thereby giving the victim the immediate support they require. The issuing of a DVPN requires police authorisation at the rank of Superintendent or above.

Within 48 hours of the DVPN being served on the perpetrator, an application for a DVPO must be made by police, and heard in a Magistrates Court (Sundays and public holidays are excluded from this 48 hour time limit). The DVPN continues in effect until the court has reached a decision. If the court rules that the victim requires continued support, they may issue a DVPO which would last for a minimum of 14 days, and a maximum of 28 days.

The law allows a magistrate to make a DVPO against the abuser even if the victim does not agree to it. In addition, the magistrates will take into account the welfare of anyone under 18 who the police consider will be affected by the DVPO.

Restraining orders

These can be made by a court in relation to a criminal case alleging domestic abuse, whether or not the case is upheld. A restraining order is made when there is a need for the order to protect a named person or persons from harassment or conduct that will put them in fear of violence.

A restraining order imposes prohibitions and may cover a range of behaviour. It can, for example exclude a person from a specific geographical area, from contacting specific people, or behaving in a particular way.

It lasts for one year from the date it is signed by the court, or until it is revoked. It can be renewed for one year at a time if the courts believe that the victim is still in danger.

It is a crime to breach a restraining order and a person doing so can be arrested and charged.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 13 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

Civil law Injunctions

A person at risk of domestic abuse can make an application for an injunction. They can do this by applying directly via a solicitor, with the assistance of a specialist domestic abuse support service.

An injunction is a 'stay away' order which prevents the abuser from certain behaviour (such as contacting the victim) or compels them to action (for example, to leave the home).

There are two types of injunction available: an occupation order, and a no molestation order.

Non-molestation orders

A non-molestation order can protect a person and any relevant child from violence or harassment. A person can obtain a non-molestation order against someone who has not been physically violent, but has been harassing, intimidating or pestering her.

If an order is breached, a criminal offence will have been committed. With the victim's consent and support, and if appropriate, St Leger Homes may be able to use this as evidence to take action for breach of tenancy.

Non-molestation orders can run for a fixed period, or indefinitely. Generally they run until they are cancelled by a court.

Occupation orders

This is another type of injunction, which establishes who has the right to remain in a home.

An occupation order can order an abuser to move out of the home, or to keep a certain distance from the home; it can order the abuser to stay in certain parts of the home at certain times (for example, order them to sleep in a different bedroom), to let the victim back into the home if they have been locked out, or order them to continue to pay the rent or bills.

An order can last for six to 12 months, and some can be renewed.

A breach of an occupation order is not a criminal offence unless a power of arrest is attached.

Breaching an occupation order with a power of arrest could lead to up to two years in prison or a large fine.

Domestic Abuse Offender Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)

This scheme is administered by South Yorkshire Police, and allows someone to make enquires about their partner if they are worried that they may have been abusive in the past.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 14 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski

If police checks show that there may be a risk, they will consider sharing the information.

An application can be made directly by the affected person if they have a concern that they may be at risk of harm; or any concerned third party (such as parents or friends) can also make an application if they are concerned.

However, if someone else applies, they would not receive the information; it would only be given to the person in the relationship, or someone who is in a position to protect them from the abuse.

Page	Version	Date	Author
Page 15 of 19	1		Julie Jablonski