

Domestic Abuse (Clients)

Policy

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Version Control

Version	Details	Date
v1	Initial draft of procedure	11 May 2020
	Schedule Update to 1.1 to reflect Domestic Abuse Act 2021	

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 1.1.1. Encompass defines/uses the UK Government definition of Domestic Abuse, and the definition set out in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) as follows:
- 1.1.2. 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
- 1.1.3. Controlling behaviour is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 1.1.4. Coercive behaviour is defined as 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.
- 1.1.5. This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and

forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

- 1.1.6. The term VAWG refers to the following range of serious crime types which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls: Domestic Violence and Abuse; Sexual Offences; Stalking; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour'; Forced Marriage; forced Prostitution; and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.
- 1.2. Our approach to safeguarding aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse or neglect.
- 1.3. [Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference \(MARAC\)](#) is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help people at high risk of murder or serious harm. This includes a domestic abuse specialist (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor - IDVA), police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies.
- 1.4. [DASH: Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist](#) is used by all staff working with domestic abuse victims to assess the level of risk to the victim.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy and procedure covers the overarching Encompass approach to all clients who may be survivors or perpetrators of domestic abuse, as well as their families and other visitors to our services. For some service areas, additional specific guidance and procedures apply.
- 2.2. This procedure must be applied in conjunction with the Encompass' [Safeguarding Policy](#).
- 2.3. Encompass' response to abuse occurring between adults who are not former or current intimate partners or family members, or who may or may not live together should be in line with the [Safeguarding Policy](#)

3. Policy

- 3.1. Encompass believes domestic abuse is unacceptable whenever and however it occurs.
- 3.2. Reports of domestic abuse can be made to Encompass staff in a variety of ways - in person, by telephone, via email, online form on Sutton Home Choice or via third party referrer.
- 3.3. Encompass will respond to reports of domestic abuse within the following timescales:

- 3.3.1. Reports made in person, by telephone or email to the Housing Advice Team will be responded to the same day.
- 3.3.2. Email reports to other teams or staff members will be responded to within two working days.
- 3.3.3. Reports made through Sutton Home Choice will be responded to within two working days.
- 3.3.4. Referrals from other organisations will be responded to the same day.
- 3.3.5. Where a report is made by telephone and it is not safe for the survivor to be called back the contact centre agent will contact a member of the duty team to arrange to put the client straight through to them.
- 3.4. When arranging an appointment with the appropriate member of staff, we will offer survivors a choice of times (within office hours), contact methods (in person, telephone, video call, email) and location, where possible. We will listen to survivors with a non-judgemental and believing approach.
 - 3.4.1. We aim to empower survivors by advising them of their options and giving guidance so they can make their own decisions.
 - 3.4.2. Survivors' choices will be prioritised as far as possible subject to an assessment of safety.
- 3.5. Where required, we will offer a meeting within (48 hours) of receiving a notification, and this will usually be the same day.
- 3.6. When domestic abuse has been identified, we will ensure the level of risk is identified using the DASH risk identification checklist. This will be completed by an appropriately trained officer
- 3.7. Where appropriate we will refer clients (with their consent) to Transform or other specialist agencies for support and advice.
- 3.8. We will provide information about the legal and civil options available, including where to get independent legal advice.
- 3.9. We will provide information about housing options available.
- 3.10. We will offer referrals to appropriate services such as the sanctuary scheme, Welfare Reform, Citizens Advice and specialist domestic abuse services.
- 3.11. We seek consent for referrals or to share information with other agencies, following our data protection policy and [Privacy Notice](#). We

will only involve other agencies or share information without the consent of the client:

- 3.11.1. If required to do so by law;
 - 3.11.2. If information sharing is necessary for the detection or prevention of crime; or
 - 3.11.3. To safeguard individuals and for the protection of survivors.
- 3.12. If requested, we will arrange for an officer to report domestic abuse to the police on behalf of the client or to support the client to do this themselves.
 - 3.13. Encompass will develop effective partnerships with agencies working with survivors and other relevant agencies. When carrying out safety planning, staff will consult specialist domestic abuse agencies and participate in the MARAC process.
 - 3.14. Encompass will ensure that the appropriate staff are trained to identify and safely assess risks relating to domestic abuse and safety needs, and to take appropriate action. Staff will use the Safelives DASH RIC checklist to identify, assess and review risks. Where support is needed, staff will seek advice from specialist partner agencies.
 - 3.15. Encompass staff will be mindful that many clients will have experienced trauma in their childhood or past. Staff will listen, believe and support the client to decide what support they would like to access.
 - 3.16. Encompass believes all domestic abuse is unacceptable, and recognises that some clients of the service may be perpetrators of domestic abuse. The safety of the victim and family will come first.
 - 3.17. Encompass will support and signpost survivors to take legal and civil action and work in partnership with landlords and housing providers to support legal action against perpetrators.
 - 3.18. Where it is safe to do so, staff will support positive engagement of the perpetrator by providing information on perpetrator programmes. This support can be accessed via a referral to Transform or we can provide details of the Respect Helpline.
 - 3.19. Staff will seek advice from specialist agencies to help them manage and accommodate clients who are perpetrators, and to seek assistance with identifying and managing the risks that the client poses to other clients and to others in the community.
 - 3.20. All staff will receive training appropriate to their role to enable them to proactively identify, report and take action against domestic abuse in Encompass services and refer to Safeguarding Adults and/or Safeguarding Children.

- 3.21. Encompass will provide training to relevant staff on how to work effectively with survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

4. Diversity

- 4.1. Encompass recognises that domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability and religious beliefs, and that not all survivors access services equally due to experiencing additional barriers to disclosing domestic abuse.
- 4.2. Encompass recognises that most abuse is perpetrated by men against women, and women are more likely than men to suffer repeat incidents of domestic abuse and serious physical or mental injury or death as a result of such abuse.
- 4.2.1. [Official figures](#) show that in the year ending March 2020 an estimated 2.4 million adults experienced domestic abuse - 66% of these were women, and 33% were men.
- 4.2.2. In 75% of domestic abuse incidents recorded by police, the victims were women.
- 4.2.3. Between the years ending March 2016 and 2018, 74% of domestic homicide victims were female.
- 4.3. Encompass will be equally believing of male and female clients who disclose domestic abuse and treat all survivors with the same sensitivity.
- 4.4. Anyone disclosing domestic abuse can do so to a member of staff of the same gender on request and where possible to someone of the same ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- 4.5. Encompass recognises that the following factors can contribute to additional barriers to reporting, seeking help and taking action on domestic abuse:
- Sex
 - Gender identity
 - Sexual orientation
 - Sexual reassignment
 - Race and ethnicity
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Religion

- Pregnancy and maternity
 - Marriage and civil partnership
- 4.6. Perpetrators of abuse may exploit these characteristics to further abuse victims e.g. threatening to 'out' someone for their gender identity or sexual orientation or threatening to 'deport' a victim with vulnerable immigration status.
 - 4.7. Encompass recognises that a disability (whether that be a physical, learning, neurological or mental health disability) can be a risk factor and that in some cases, the primary perpetrator of domestic abuse may also be the person's carer. Statistically, disabled women face a particularly high risk of domestic abuse.
 - 4.8. Where needed, Encompass will provide independent translators.
 - 4.9. Encompass will make information about domestic abuse available in different languages.
 - 4.10. Encompass will provide information about specialist services and support in order that services are accessible for all, and to minimise the additional barriers people face to seeking help and support.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1. 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.

6. Legislation

- 6.1. This policy takes into account the following legislation, and staff are encouraged to refer to this legislation where cases require:-
 - 6.1.1. Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - 6.1.2. Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - 6.1.3. The Family Law Act 1996
 - 6.1.4. Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
 - 6.1.5. Human Rights Act 1998
 - 6.1.6. The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Policy
 - 6.1.7. The Housing Act 1996
 - 6.1.8. The Equality Act 2010

6.1.9. Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Appendix A - Related Policies

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Personal Safety, Home Visits and Lone Working](#)

[Data Protection Policies](#)

[Domestic Abuse Policy \(Staff\)](#)

[Allocations Policy](#)

Local procedures can be accessed on the staff intranet or on the dashboard