1. What is the purpose of this policy?

This policy shows how bpha will support customers who experience domestic abuse. It covers how we will identify and respond to domestic abuse, the support we offer victims/survivors and household members, and the action we take against perpetrators of domestic abuse.

2. Who is the policy for?

This policy is for our customers and bpha colleagues who work with them.

It applies to customers and members of their household who experience, are threatened with, or witness domestic abuse; regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.

3. What are the main principles of this policy?

We will:

- Support any bpha customer and members of their household who are threatened with or experiencing domestic abuse
- Consider the individual needs of each customer in our approach, treating everyone with fairness and respect, in line with our Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Ensure we take a victim-centred approach, with the safety of the victim/survivor and their household members being our most important consideration
- Consider any report of domestic abuse as a matter of urgency, within one working day
- Use the term victim/survivor and adapt our language based on the individual preferences of our customers
- Raise awareness and understanding around domestic abuse and train all bpha colleagues and contractors to recognise and respond to it, alongside and in addition to safeguarding training. We will provide enhanced training for frontline colleagues and internal Domestic Abuse Responders within bpha
- Work in partnership with local and national specialist providers and support organisations to ensure appropriate safeguarding
- Appoint a Domestic Abuse Lead who is our Housing Operations Manager
- Learn from the experience of victims/survivors and consider recommendations from case audits, safeguarding adult reviews (SARS), serious case reviews and domestic abuse related death reviews (DARDRs) to improve services in the future.

4. How do we define domestic abuse?

We have adopted the definition in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Domestic abuse is defined as any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour (defined as acts designed to make a person feel inferior and /or dependent by keeping them apart from friends, help and support)
- Economic abuse (which impacts on the ability to use or maintain money and property, or obtain goods or services)
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

This definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Reports will be actioned whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or is part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected.

Personally connected means people who:

- Are married or civil partners, or have been in the past
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place)
- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- Are relatives.

Children aged under 18 are also recognised as victims/survivors if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the victim/survivor or the perpetrator.

This policy applies whatever the nature of the intimate relationship and applies to all genders equally.

5. How will we deliver the Customer Domestic Abuse Policy?

Recognising domestic abuse

We will train bpha colleagues to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and coercive or controlling behaviour, especially those colleagues who are in regular contact with customers.

We will ensure our housing management system includes the information needed to safeguard victims/survivors and put the correct support in place.

Reports and disclosures of domestic abuse

We will treat anyone reporting domestic abuse to bpha in a supportive, sensitive and non-judgemental way and take any disclosure of domestic abuse seriously.

We will be approachable so that victims/survivors feel safe and able to disclose domestic abuse and ask for help, recognising that it can be extremely difficult to do so.

We will provide support, such as interpreters, translations and other formats, so that everyone can report domestic abuse and access our service in the way they need.

We will always consider the needs and wishes of individual victims/survivors.

Where reports of anti-social behaviour involve domestic abuse, we will respond sensitively and with the victim/survivor's safety and wellbeing as our highest priority. These cases will be managed in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime policy and procedures.

We will investigate reports of customer domestic abuse thoroughly and take action against known perpetrators using the powers and enforcement tools available to us.

We will not make any victim/survivor feel responsible for the abuse or ask them to take any action they feel puts them in more danger. We will not seek proof of the abuse.

We will be guided by the victim/survivor's ability to assess the danger they are in, and their perception of the situation will always be of paramount importance.

Supporting customers who experience domestic abuse

We will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based risk identification checklist (DASH) in response to reports of domestic abuse.

We will offer safety planning to provide support for the customer and members of their household, including children, experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse.

We will work with statutory and voluntary organisations to support victims/survivors and their household members, including any children, to increase safety and meet practical and emotional needs.

We will appoint a specific named colleague to deal with the situation, wherever possible.

We will never insist that the victim/survivor should accept support and will always take account of individual needs.

We will stay involved and provide advice, support and assistance in relation to housing and property safety for as long as it is needed.

We will refer high risk domestic abuse cases to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where these meet local authority thresholds through the DASH assessment. Any referrals to MARAC will be made after discussion with, and consent from, the victim/survivor. If consent is not granted and there is an immediate or potential risk (to the victim/survivor or their family), a referral may be made without consent of the victim/survivor to protect them and their family from potentially serious harm. bpha colleagues may attend MARAC meetings but will only share information with those agencies attending the meeting unless agreed otherwise with the multi-agency partners.

Some examples of the type of practical support we can offer are:

- Agreeing an established safe method of communication with victims/survivors
- Dealing promptly with any damage or repair requirements caused to properties by domestic abuse
- Ensuring that a safe environment is provided, including any property the victim/survivor may be offered
- Accessing Sanctuary schemes and assisting with lock changes and other safety measures in urgent and/or vulnerable cases, to improve the security of a property to protect those inside.

What action will we take against perpetrators of domestic abuse?

We will take action against perpetrators, in line with any tenancy agreement, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

We will talk to the victim/survivor about what they need and what may be effective in engaging the perpetrator and/or managing their behaviour.

We will share information as appropriate and work with other agencies, such as the police and MARAC to find effective ways to hold perpetrators to account and work with perpetrators who can manage their behaviour. Where appropriate we will use Ground 14A of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988 to gain possession of our property where an individual tenant has left the home, but the perpetrator of domestic abuse remains in the property. Domestic abuse is a breach of tenancy.

We will put perpetrators in touch with external agencies and support organisations, who can offer them support to prevent the abuse happening again.

What happens if people need to move home?

We will discuss housing requirements with customers experiencing domestic abuse and support victims/survivors to make decisions around their housing needs including whether they wish to remain in their home or consider a move to a home in a different area. We will facilitate any agreed move to another bpha home in line with our Allocations Policy for tenanted homes, prioritising applications in date order. Further information can be found in the Allocations Policy on the policy page of the bpha website.

We will support customers experiencing domestic abuse to remain in their own home, if they want to and it is safe to do so. However, there may be occasions where temporary accommodation is required whilst safety measures are being put in place.

We will support customers who want to end a joint tenancy held with the perpetrator in a planned way and with the customer's safety being paramount. Legally the perpetrator, if a joint tenant, has the right to know the other joint tenant has requested to end the tenancy. However, we will not share information with the perpetrator without discussing and planning this with the victim/survivor first.

How will we ensure safeguarding and confidentiality?

We will follow the requirements of our Safeguarding Policy and Vulnerability Policy when dealing with cases of domestic abuse.

We treat disclosures of domestic abuse in the strictest of confidence, unless we have a duty to disclose information to protect the victim/survivor, prevent harm to someone else or prevent or detect a crime. Our colleagues will take responsibility for sharing information they have when necessary and appropriate to do so and must not assume that someone else will pass on information which may be critical to keeping someone safe. Our colleagues have Data Protection and GDPR training to ensure they are confident and competent in sharing information when necessary. We will follow our Data Protection Policy when supporting customers experiencing domestic abuse.

We support customers to be aware of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVPS), also known as 'Clare's Law', which allows Police to disclose to individuals the details of their partner's abusive past so that they can make an informed decision about their situation.

6. How can further support, advice and assistance be obtained?

Please contact our Customer Communication Centre on 0330 100 0272 or e mail us at info@bpha.org.uk We will then arrange for you to speak to a colleague in our specialist team.

The complex case team also have a list of resources for people experiencing domestic abuse and our website is regularly updated with relevant sources of support.

https://www.bpha.org.uk/my-support/domestic-abuse-support/

7. How will this policy be communicated to customers?

We will:

- Place a copy of this policy on our website
- Ensure our website is clear about the terms of the policy and how to seek help in cases of domestic abuse
- Place a copy of this policy on our intranet so that bpha colleagues are fully informed.

8. What legislative and regulatory requirements is bpha required to consider?

A range of legislation supports this policy, primarily:

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Police and Crime Act 2014 & 2026
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Stalking Protection Act 2019
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law 2014
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- FGM Act 2003
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Family Law Act 1996

9. How will this policy be monitored and reviewed?

Cases or concerns about domestic abuse are referred to our complex case team and monitored through that team with oversight through the relevant Director.

Safeguarding cases are also monitored including domestic abuse cases. Our Board has formal oversight of our work on safeguarding.

Personal information may be collected if required to provide tailored support to customers. We only collect information in line with data protection legislation and review and monitor this information to meet equalities requirements.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there is a change in regulation or legislation governing the items that this policy covers.

Policy Number	Approved by	Date Approved	Policy Owner
H0062	Executive Leadership Team	26 October 2026	Head of Housing Operations