

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Board Approval:	August 2025	Responsible Board:	Ocean Housing Ltd
Next Review:	August 2028	Responsible Executive:	Managing Director of Ocean Housing Ltd

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Ocean Housing is a provider of social housing for people in need in Cornwall. Our mission is *'to be an innovative provider of quality homes and services, with residents and staff at the heart of Ocean, and Ocean at the heart of the community.'*
- 1.2 This policy sets out how we will deal with domestic abuse that affects Ocean Housing residents or their families and how we will assist survivors of domestic abuse. It also sets out the action we will consider taking against perpetrators of domestic abuse. This policy applies to all our customers and those living with them.
- 1.3 The policy underpins our Mission Statement above and Golden Threads:
- Have residents at the heart of everything we do
 - Maintain strong and effective Governance
 - Provide good quality services, right first time
 - Provide innovative, energy efficient, good quality homes
 - Be an employer of choice
- 1.4 At Ocean Housing, we believe everyone has the right to feel safe in their home. Our Policy commits to:
- Treating all reports of domestic abuse seriously
 - Taking a confidential, caring and sensitive person-centred approach
 - Preventing abuse wherever possible and reducing the risk of further abuse and harm
 - Ensuring Ocean Housing staff are confident in recognising all forms of domestic abuse and in how to report and flag concerns
 - Safeguarding and helping survivors of abuse, including children, to access appropriate support services
 - Working with other organisations to reduce risk and take action against abusers
 - Taking tenancy enforcement or appropriate legal action where appropriate
 - Offering support and signposting to appropriate agencies for anyone identified as experiencing domestic abuse

- Working in partnership with other local agencies and specialist organisations to ensure the survivor of domestic abuse has access to the advice, care and support they need.

1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with other Ocean Housing policies including:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children
- Allocations and Lettings
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Vulnerable Persons
- Data Protection
- Mutual Exchange

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Ocean Housing is committed to its role as a responsible landlord prioritising the independence, safety and wellbeing of all our residents. We believe that no one should have to live in fear of domestic abuse and we are dedicated to identifying and assisting anyone affected.

2.2 Domestic abuse is not only a criminal offence but also a serious breach of our tenancy agreements. It threatens the safety of individuals, families and the wider community. Because abuse often happens within the home, we recognise our responsibility to help identify these situations and work to reduce risk.

2.3 Ocean Housing is committed to having clear, compassionate, and non-judgemental policies and procedures in place to ensure we respond appropriately and effectively.

3.0 SCOPE AND DEFINITION

3.1 This policy is intended to cover all Ocean residents, including tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and other occupants.

3.2 The Government definition of domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is:

'Any incident of controlling, coercive, 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 (Family members are: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, & grandparents; directly-related, in-laws or step family).

3.3 This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional
- Digital (using smartphones and social networking to harass and intimidate).
- Coercive control

3.4 The full definition can be accessed by following this link:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

4.0 THE POLICY

4.1 We will seek the survivors' consent where necessary, however there may be circumstances where consent is not required i.e. criminal behaviour is taking place, the person lacks mental capacity or there is significant risk of harm.

4.2 In applying this policy, Ocean will consider a range of measures to support survivors and address domestic abuse. These may include but are not limited to:

- Providing a safe, non-judgemental space to talk or seek advice
- Helping make the home more secure after an incident
- Assisting with rehousing applications, including through HomeChoice and HomeSwapper or refer to other agencies for support with this
- Taking legal action against perpetrators and refer to specialist agencies for legal advice and assistance that is not tenancy related
- Working closely with local and specialist organisations and share key information with partners like police and health services
- Adapting our services to meet individual needs (e.g. neutral meeting locations, agreed-gender staff)
- Using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Checklist and safety plans to assess and manage risk.
- Refer high-risk cases to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) or share information where DASH threshold is met or where our professional judgement supports this sharing
- Protecting survivor privacy in joint tenancies by anonymising records and redacting sensitive information where possible
- Utilising information sharing protocols with other agencies including the police and health department so that key information is shared between agencies

5.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

5.1 Ocean collects data on our tenants to enable our service offer to be tailored to meet the needs of all tenants and any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

5.2 Ocean recognises that survivors of domestic abuse come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.

5.3 Domestic abuse is a crime where women are disproportionately affected, however men can also be survivors. Ocean will adopt an inclusive approach to ensure that all survivors receive support tailored to their individual needs and aspirations.

5.4 We will signpost residents who have leave to remain in the UK to access the correct support from the Home Office.

6.0 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS AND SIGNPOSTING

6.1 We may signpost or offer additional support such as budgeting advice, translation services or other appropriate adjustments to survivors and members of their household where a need is identified.

6.2 We will ask if a survivor would prefer to speak to an employee of the same gender and/or sexual orientation and facilitate their preference as to where.

6.3 Where a survivor chooses to remain in the relationship, we will offer to signpost the family to community behavioural change programmes in their area.

7.0 RAISING CUSTOMER AWARENESS

7.1 We will keep our website up to date with clear, accessible information on domestic abuse and regularly review its content.

7.2 We will actively promote available support through various channels and take part in awareness campaigns like **Domestic Abuse Month** and **White Ribbon Day**.

7.3 Information will be made available including in other languages where needed.

7.4 Relevant staff will receive training to recognise signs of domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns, and to respond appropriately.

7.5 We recognise that staff may also be affected by domestic abuse. Ocean Housing offers support through our **Employee Assistance Programme** and other internal resources.

8.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

8.1 Delivery of this policy rests with the Head of Customer Experience and Neighbourhood Services. Responsibility for this policy rests with the Managing Director of Ocean Housing.

9.0 MONITORING

9.1 Domestic abuse will be managed and monitored in a number of ways:

- Attendance by Ocean at MARAC
- Participation in available schemes which provides practical help and support including extra security to the home
- Recording the number of cases requiring this level of involvement
- Referral of relevant cases to the Ocean Housing Safeguarding Board

- A quarterly summary activity report to Executive Group
- An annual update to Ocean Housing Board.
- Any exceptional issues that occur outside of this cycle will be reported to EG and/or Board by the Managing Director of OHL.

9.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years.

10.0 DEFINITIONS

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	MARAC is a meeting between representatives from statutory, community and voluntary agencies working with survivors of domestic abuse, children and the alleged perpetrator.
Survivor	This term replaces the use of the word “victim” to describe those who have experienced domestic abuse. It covers individuals who are working on removing the risk of harm and those for whom the risk of harm has now been removed.