

Homes First Domestic Abuse Policy

Consultation report

July 2023

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Background

Homes First, the housing service for Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council (in partnership with Eastbourne Homes Limited), believe that tenants, leaseholders and people living with them should not live in fear of violence or abuse.

We take all forms of domestic abuse seriously and are committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone who approaches for assistance in cases of domestic abuse.

Our draft Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the approach we take to assist and support people experiencing or threatened, with violence or abuse. The policy has been developed in consultation with our tenants.

The scope of the policy includes all tenants, leaseholders and people living with our tenants and leaseholders. It also applies to customers accessing housing via the housing waiting list and customers accessing support from our Housing Options and Wellbeing Team. Non-housing customers will also benefit from an increased awareness of domestic abuse issues and support amongst staff across the councils as a result of the policy and DAHA accreditation. For example, general staff will be better able to identify where abuse could be occurring and escalate or signpost to appropriate support.

The Policy is part of the councils' ongoing work towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. You can find more information about DAHA and its key aims at www.dahalliance.org.uk

How we consulted

From Monday 6th June to Wednesday 5th July 2023, we invited feedback from tenants, leaseholders, residents, and statutory and voluntary partners for their views on our draft Homes First Domestic Abuse Policy.

We undertook the following activities:

- Published the draft strategy on our website.
- Made an online survey available and offered this in other formats and languages.
- Promoted the consultation via a press release to the local media.
- Published a news story on the council website.
- Sent an email to our mailing lists for housing, news and consultations (about **36,000** recipients in total).
- Promoted the consultation repeatedly on all council corporate and housing social media profiles.
- Ran a live Q&A with the Leader of Lewes District Council and Lead Member for Housing in Lewes alongside the specialist leading the consultation.
- Emailed all Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough councilors.
- We sent a briefing to our call centre staff.
- Sent a reminder email one week before the consultation closing date.

We wrote to the following organisations inviting them to comment on the policy:

- East Sussex County Council – Including their Voices of Lived Experience Board (VOLEB) which is a pan-Sussex group made up of former victims/survivors of domestic abuse who are active and engaged with supporting domestic abuse related work across Sussex.
- Change Grow Live: Domestic Abuse Service East Sussex – The local provider of domestic abuse related support services.
- Clarion – Provider of emergency Refuge accommodation in East Sussex.
- Switchboard – A domestic abuse service for LGBTQ people based in Brighton.

We also approached our involved tenant groups in the consultation process with the assistance of our Tenant Involvement Team. This included:

- Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)
- Residents Voice (Eastbourne)
- Tenants Communication Panel
- Virtual 300

We also had a face-to-face feedback session with tenants at the Tenants Resource Centre in Lewes which was facilitated by a Senior Caseworker in the Tenant Involvement Team.

A summary of the responses we received through the consultation is available below.

Updates to the policy following consultation.

From the consultation there were some themes identified that have helped us to develop the policy further ahead of its next steps.

- Who/What is 'Homes First' – Following feedback we have included a clear definition of what Homes First is and its role within Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils. We have also tried to be clearer about how the policy can apply or affect those who may not be a Homes First tenant or leaseholder.
- A simple definition of 'Domestic Abuse' – We have replaced the definition that was taken from the DA Act 2021 and replaced it with a simple clear definition. We have also highlighted the Appendix document 'Types of Domestic Abuse' in a more prominent position. This document contains more detailed descriptions of types of abuse and will be published alongside the policy as an accompanying document.
- Language/Tense – Following feedback we have tried to be consistent with the language and tense used in the policy. We have favored a 'we will/you can' style over a more formal 'victims/survivors can' type of language. We have also used footnotes to further explain key terms such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) and 'Sanctuary Schemes'

- Different Victims – We have ensured that we have highlighted the fact that domestic abuse can and does happen to different groups of people and we have highlighted our understanding of this intersectional experience.




Next steps

Homes First officers have considered the feedback received through the consultation and have updated the policy.

The revised policy will go to the Eastbourne Homes Limited Board for further comment before being submitted to the relevant Lead Cabinet Members in each authority for approval.

If you have any questions about our Domestic Abuse Policy, please email Ray Brickley – Senior Specialist Advisor Domestic Abuse Ray.Brickley@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk





Summary of survey responses

1. Under which Local Authority area do you live?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Eastbourne Borough		35.42%	17
2	Lewes District		56.25%	27
3	Other (please specify):		8.33%	4

		answered	48
		skipped	3
Other (please specify): (4)			
1	Brighton and Hove - 2 responses		

2 Other - 2






2. In what capacity are you responding?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Homes First Tenant		33.33% 16
2	Leaseholder		6.25% 3
3	Resident (whether Home Owner or Privately Renting)		35.42% 17
4	Other (please specify):		25.00% 12
		answered	48
		skipped	3

Other (please specify): (12)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | An EBC resident - 4 responses |
| 2 | An LDC resident - 4 |
| 3 | Professional - 3 |
| 4 | Housing association tenant - 2 |






3. Are the aims of the Policy clear and understandable? The policy itself aims to cover the Councils responsibility as a landlord and for those people who may be presenting to our services as homeless because of domestic abuse (DA)

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly disagree		4.00%	2
2	Disagree		14.00%	7
3	Neither agree nor disagree		12.00%	6
4	Agree		38.00%	19
5	Strongly agree		32.00%	16
			answered	50
			skipped	1






Feedback/Comments: (21)

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Issue with language – 7 comments |
| 2 | Issue with definitions used – 4 |
| 3 | Need for greater accessibility - 2 |
| 4 | Length of the policy – 2 |
| 5 | Needs more clarity – 2 |
| 6 | Positive comment about the policy - 2 |






4. Is the language of the policy clear and accessible? Please note any feedback relating to use of jargon, acronyms, or a lack of 'plain English' in the document

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly disagree		2.00%	1
2	Disagree		12.00%	6
3	Neither agree nor disagree		14.00%	7
4	Agree		38.00%	19
5	Strongly agree		34.00%	17
			answered	50
			skipped	1
Feedback/Comments: (13)				
1	The policy is clear – 5 comments			
2	The policy could be more clear – 5			
3	Use fewer acronyms – 5			

5. Does the policy reflect commitments to equality and diversity? Domestic Abuse affects all areas of our community and ensuring our policy is reflective and inclusive of the different experiences of DA is extremely important. Our Equality and Fairness Policy can be found [*here*](#)

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly disagree		8.16%	4
2	Disagree		6.12%	3
3	Neither agree nor disagree		16.33%	8
4	Agree		30.61%	15
5	Strongly agree		38.78%	19
			answered	49
			skipped	2
Feedback/Comments: (12)				
1	The policy reflects commitments to equality – 3 comments			
2	More work is needed – 3			
3	Positive comments – 2			

6. If you or someone you knew were suffering from domestic abuse would you feel confident about the support contained within the policy? The policy should offer a guidance to those suffering domestic abuse of the commitments and support that can be offered from Homes First and EBC/LDC as a whole.

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly disagree		8.70%	4
2	Disagree		15.22%	7
3	Neither agree nor disagree		19.57%	9
4	Agree		26.09%	12
5	Strongly agree		30.43%	14
			answered	46
			skipped	5



Feedback/Comments: (15)

1	Tenancy support is needed – 5 comments
2	Information sharing – 3
3	Language of the policy needs to be clear – 3
4	Training for staff – 3
5	Speed of response – 3
6	Collaboration with other agencies – 2




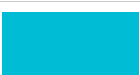

7. Any other Comments/ Feedback on the Policy or EBC/LDCs work on Domestic Abuse: What do you believe are some of the key issues facing those suffering from domestic abuse? How can a local authority best support these victims/survivors?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	32
1	Support – 20 comments		
2	Better communication needed – 13		
3	More collaboration - 10		
4	Positive comments about the policy - 8		
5	Clearer definitions - 5		
6	Promotion - 4		
7	Children - 3		
		answered	32
		skipped	19




8. The following questions are about you.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Answer questions about me		64.44% 29
2	Skip the questions about me		35.56% 16
		answered	45
		skipped	6



9. What is your age?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	17 or younger		0.00% 0
2	18-20		0.00% 0
3	21-29		12.12% 4
4	30-39		9.09% 3
5	40-49		24.24% 8
6	50-59		27.27% 9
7	60 or older		27.27% 9
		answered	33
		skipped	18

10. Do you have a disability?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		47.06% 16
2	No		47.06% 16
3	Prefer not to say		5.88% 2
		answered	34
		skipped	17

11. What is your Ethnicity?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
White			
1	British		82.35% 28
2	Irish		0.00% 0
3	Other		2.94% 1
Asian or Asian British			
4	Indian		0.00% 0
5	Pakistani		0.00% 0
6	Bangladeshi		0.00% 0
7	Any other Asian background		0.00% 0

11. What is your Ethnicity?

Mixed

8	White and Black Caribbean		0.00%	0
9	White and black African		0.00%	0
10	White and Asian		2.94%	1
11	Any other mixed background		5.88%	2

Black or Black British

12	Caribbean		0.00%	0
13	African		2.94%	1
14	Any other black background		0.00%	0






Other Ethnic Group

15	Chinese		0.00%	0
16	Any other Ethnic Group		0.00%	0
17	I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin		2.94%	1

answered 34

skipped 17

12. What is your gender identity?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male 	18.18%	6
2	Female 	72.73%	24
3	Cisgender	0.00%	0
4	Transgender 	3.03%	1
5	Non Binary 	3.03%	1
6	Prefer not to say 	3.03%	1
7	Other (please specify):	0.00%	0
		answered	33
		skipped	18
Other (please specify): (0)			