



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Erimus Housing is committed to providing a high quality service to the victims of domestic violence. Erimus Housing is actively involved in a number of multi-agency domestic violence arrangements and firmly believes that no one agency can work effectively in isolation and that robust multi agency working is the right approach in tackling domestic violence. Erimus Housing is an active member of Middlesbrough Domestic Violence forum and has instigated a number of initiatives which were developed through a multi agency approach. These services are developed to offer victims increased protection which may lead to increased feelings of safety within the home.

1.2 It is recognised that domestic violence can take place in the following circumstances:

- Within heterosexual relationships;
- Within same sex relationships;
- Between various members of the household e.g. son violent towards his mother.

However, research shows that in the majority of cases, more women are the victims of domestic violence.

1.3 Applicants who approach Erimus Housing for advice due to domestic violence will receive good quality advice and information to assist them in making informed choices about their future. This will be achieved through a holistic multi-agency approach.

1.4 Erimus Housing will ensure that no individual, group or community is socially excluded or disadvantaged in accessing these services.

2. REFERENCES

2.1 External

Legislation and regulation

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homeless Strategy
- Lettings Policy

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Housing Act 2004
- Family Law Act 1996
- Children Act 1989

Guidance

- KLOE 7: Allocations and lettings;
- KLOE 8: Homelessness;
- KLOE 6: Tenancy and Estate Management.

2.2 Internal

Business plan/corporate objectives

Erimus Housing will continue to develop our partnership approach in the reduction and improvement of services to people fleeing domestic violence. Erimus Housing aims to provide good quality homes with improved security to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, through the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-social behaviour policy and procedure;
- Equality and diversity strategy;
- Homelessness strategy;
- Tenancy Management policy and procedures
- Respect agenda;
- Lettings policy;
- Vulnerable persons policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Erimus Housing has adapted the following definition of domestic violence “Any incident of threatening behaviour, abuse or violence (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This violence may be physical sexual or emotional.

3.2 Examples of domestic violence can include all or some of the below:

Physical Violence or threat of physical violence	Slapping, pushing, kicking and stabbing, attempted murder or murder
Sexual Violence	Rape and non consensual sex acts
Emotional or psychological violence	Intimidation, isolation, verbal violence, humiliation, degradation, threat of violence not allowing friends or relatives to visit or phone, destruction of belongings, threat of legal

	sanctions e.g. deportation, custody of children etc
Financial violence	Denial of rights of restriction of personal freedom e.g. withholding money or medical help.

4. POLICY CONTENT

- 4.1 Erimus Housing will ensure that victims of domestic violence are interviewed by officers of the same sex. Woman fleeing domestic violence will also be referred to “My Sisters Place”, which a one-stop shop facility providing dedicated support, assistance and advice to women who have or are experiencing domestic violence. This provision allows women to access a wide range of agency and support services relating to domestic violence on an emotional and practical level under one roof. Furthermore, the centre also has a drop-in facility, which is staffed by specialist workers from a range of different statutory and voluntary organisations.
- 4.2 All Homechoice prevention officers will receive training on domestic violence issues to ensure a consistent and sympathetic approach.
- 4.3 Erimus Housing does not tolerate perpetrators of domestic violence; a clause in the company’s Tenancy Agreement as below, highlights that Erimus Housing may take action against any perpetrator of domestic violence remaining in the property after the victim has left. The safety of the victim will always remain paramount and this course of action will only be taken after considering all the facts of each individual case.

Examples of behaviour that will be address:

- Violence or threats of violence against any other person living with you or living elsewhere;
 - Harassment or carrying out mental or sexual abuse which makes anyone who lives with you leave the home.
- 4.4 Erimus Housing tenants who are fleeing domestic violence may be offered a management let to a property on a like for like basis if they are unable to remain in their tenancy.
- 4.5 Objectives
- 4.5.1 Erimus Housing will continue to work in partnership in order to deliver an excellent service to people fleeing domestic violence. Partnership agencies include “My Sisters Place” one stop shop for domestic violence, Middlesbrough Domestic Violence Forum, Middlesbrough Policy and Harbour.

- 4.5.2 People fleeing domestic violence will be offered a private and confidential interview with a same sex officer, at their request.
- 4.5.3 All employees will be trained on the importance of maintaining confidentiality to ensure the safety of the applicant. Erimus Housing will only involve or share information with other agencies after explaining this to the applicant, if and when this is required, unless:
- We are required to do so under the Child Protection Act;
 - We are required to do this by law.
- 4.5.4 If an interpreter is required, this will be arranged with the language line, to ensure confidentiality.
- 4.5.5 Women fleeing domestic violence, wherever possible will be interviewed at “My Sisters Place”, one stop shop for women fleeing domestic violence, to ensure that women are empowered to make their own decisions by being provided with a range of options, support and information.
- 4.5.6 Erimus Housing aims to deal with all domestic violence cases as a priority, efficiently and sensitively. This will be achieved through partnership working, compliance with legislative framework, adopting good practice initiatives and by training officers to a high standard in this service area.
- 4.5.7 Alternative security and legal routes to housing will be explored, however, a victim will never be forced to take these options if s/he does not feel safe.
- 4.5.8 We will not ask victims to prove that they have experienced violence.
- 4.5.9 No contact will be made with the person responsible for the violence/abuse in relation to the investigation. However, Erimus Housing may need to contact the alleged perpetrator with regards to tenancy issues. The safety of the victim would be considered prior to this course of action.
- 4.5.10 Applicants fleeing domestic violence can be offered emergency accommodation. This will usually be a refuge for woman fleeing domestic violence. Men fleeing domestic violence may be offered a hostel. Bed & Breakfast accommodation will be used as a last resort, if no other suitable temporary accommodation is available.
- 4.6. Information and Support
- 4.6.1 Erimus Housing will provide victims of domestic violence with an information pack providing useful contacts for other relevant agencies, together with the homeless out of hours contact number. This includes a number of agencies working with people fleeing domestic violence for

both males and females offering an advice line, floating support and emergency refuge for women.

- 4.6.2 Assistance will be provided to applicants who need help in completing the application form, including those who have language or literacy difficulties and those with special needs e.g. applicants with a physical disability; major medical needs; and older/vulnerable people. Vulnerable customers will be identified from the questions on the application form or during office or telephone interviews with applicants or staff. Home visits will be arranged with applicants who have difficulty in accessing the scheme. Officer safety will be considered prior to a home visit being arranged.
- 4.6.3 Erimus Housing will ensure that all policies and procedures are fair, accountable and provide equality of opportunity around gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 5.1 This policy will undergo a periodic review, and an Equality Needs Impact assessment will be conducted as part of this review process to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose, non discriminatory, and that any changes in legislation or statute are considered and incorporated.

6 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Erimus Housing will consult the Residents' Panel, Area Housing Forums, Income Management Focus Group, Residents' Associations, and other recognised residents groups, local voluntary and statutory agencies on a regular basis in order to continually develop good practice in this policy area.
- 6.2 The policy has been developed in conjunction with staff and customers, and incorporates areas of Best Practice issued by the Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1 Monitoring

- 7.1.1 Monitoring results will be used by Erimus Housing to inform future policy review in this area. All reviews will consider whether:
- The current policy adheres to legislative and regulatory requirements, and reflects current good practice;
 - The aims and objectives of the policy being met;
 - The current policy outcomes meet the needs and aspirations of our diverse customer base;

- Service users are aware of and understand the policy and believe it to be consistent and fair;
- The policy provides sufficient choice for customers;
- The service offers value for money;
- Partnership arrangements are working effectively.

Overall monitoring and review of the policy will be undertaken in consultation with:

- Staff groups;
- Board members;
- Existing and future service users;
- Resident and community groups;
- Partners, local voluntary agencies and other statutory services as relevant.

7.2 Review

7.2.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with legislative or regulatory changes.

8. RESPONSIBILITY

8.1 The Group Director of Operations retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The service head is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and the associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and review, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to customers.