

Domestic Abuse Policy for the Housing Service

1.0 Introduction and policy purpose

1.1 We believe that everyone has the right to live free from fear of abuse or violence. We know that domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity differences. Although it can happen to anyone, we acknowledge the gendered nature of domestic abuse and that it disproportionately affects women and girls.

1.2 Between July 2022 and June 2023, 202 households affected by domestic abuse applied as homeless in North Yorkshire. Office for National Statistics figures show 8,652 domestic abuse-related crimes were recorded by North Yorkshire Police in the year ending March 2022. It is likely that many more people are affected, and authorities are unaware of the abuse.

1.3 We believe that as a local authority and housing provider, we are well placed to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. We have a duty to support our tenants in social housing by training our staff to identify domestic abuse and respond appropriately. We recognise that there are many barriers to disclosing domestic abuse, but we want to reassure our residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members that any concerns they raise will be met with an empathetic and appropriate response.

1.4 This policy acts in the intention of reducing the risk of domestic abuse, and outlines how we will respond to domestic abuse when it affects our residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members.

1.5 This policy references the support we will provide to those who are victims of, or have been victims of, domestic abuse. It states that we will not condone or tolerate domestic abuse, and outlines how we will hold perpetrators of domestic abuse accountable for their actions.

2.0 Note on language

2.1 In this policy we use the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. 'Victim' is used to refer to the person/s who has been or is being abused, and 'perpetrator' refers to the person/s who is acting, or has acted, abusively.

2.2 We use these terms as they allow us to describe how the abuse affects those involved, in a context in which individual names are not available or appropriate to use.

2.3 We recognise that a 'victim' may prefer to be referred to as 'survivor', but we have chosen to use 'victim' within this policy as it allows us to clearly acknowledge that a person is or has been subjected to domestic abuse, without making assumptions about where they are within their own personal journey.

2.4 Within our practices, and particularly when engaging directly with those who are, or have been victims of domestic abuse, we will use the terms of address that they prefer where it is possible to do so.

3.0 Policy scope

3.1 This policy applies to residents within the North Yorkshire area, North Yorkshire Council tenants and leaseholders, and North Yorkshire Council members.

3.2 Although this policy is primarily for North Yorkshire Council residents, tenants, leaseholders and members, the guidance included within Appendix 2 can be used by anyone who needs to access support as a victim of domestic abuse or information is available on our website <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/adult-care/safeguarding/domestic-abuse> .

3.3 This policy links to [North Yorkshire and City of York Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2028](#) and the Vision statement in the policy is shown below

'In North Yorkshire and York, we do not tolerate domestic abuse and we will strive to ensure everyone can live free from abuse and harm. We will work to create an environment where healthy relationships are the norm and where victims/survivors and their children have access to the right support at the right time.'

Domestic abuse is everybody's business, where our partnerships will work collaboratively to create lasting change across all our communities and the voice of the victim is at the heart of our response and where perpetrators of abuse are held accountable for their behaviour'.

4.0 Our values

4.1 We are committed to demonstrating our organisational values in all that we do, including how we support those affected by domestic abuse.

We will:

- Be honest about the prevalence of domestic abuse, and act with integrity by doing all we can to support residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members who have been affected.
- Utilise the support of our council services and departments, specialist domestic abuse services and partner agencies, because we recognise that we need to support each other and work together to provide a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse.
- Be ambitious for our places and our people by continuously seeking opportunities to improve our response to domestic abuse.
- Be accountable to each other and honour the trust that our residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members place in us when sharing their experience/s of domestic abuse by responding respectfully and providing guidance about how and where they can access further support.
- Respect Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in everything we do, including how we recognise and respond to domestic abuse. We will take an intersectional approach when responding to domestic abuse by considering how a person's experience of domestic abuse may be impacted by their sex, age, gender identity, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, pregnancy status, social background, or a combination of these differences.
- Work towards becoming trauma-informed by delivering training and reviewing our services.

5.0 Definition of domestic abuse

5.1 This policy uses an abridged version of the definition of domestic abuse provided by the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#).

5.2 Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if "A" and "B" are each aged 16 or over and are "personally connected" to each other:

"Personally connected" means:

- they are, or have been, married to each other
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other

- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- they are relatives

And

- the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

5.3 It **does not matter** whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of actions: behaviour of this kind is domestic abuse.

5.4 Domestic abuse includes ‘Honour Based Violence’ which is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and / or community by breaking their honour code.

For young victims it is a form of child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members. Women, men, and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse. (Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy July 2021).

5.5 More information about “Honour Based Violence” and other forms of abuse (including those that can also be domestic abuse), is included in our joint multi-agency safeguarding adults’ policy and procedure, West Yorkshire North Yorkshire and City of York) available on this link: <https://safeguardingadults.co.uk/working-with-adults/nysab-procedures/>.

5.6 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse, even when the abusive behaviours are not directly aimed at them.

They can also be victims if they:

- See, hear, or experience the effects of abuse
- Are related to the victim or perpetrator of the abuse (or both)

5.7 Further information about how domestic abuse affects children is provided in North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/northyorkshire/scb/> .

6.0 Our aims and practices

6.1 We will:

- **Support our employees to confidently recognise and appropriately respond to domestic abuse** by providing mandatory level one domestic abuse training for all employees in housing in customer facing and management roles. Additional training will be provided as it is relevant to the employees' roles and their level of engagement with residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members. This policy is supported by internal procedures and guidance that our employees can refer to.
- **Make information on different types of domestic abuse readily available** through regular communications and during our engagement with our community.
- **Set the expectation for all domestic abuse disclosures to be responded to empathetically and appropriately.** We have created a set of standards that victims of domestic abuse can expect us to uphold when they disclose domestic abuse to us. These are available at the end of this document, as Appendix 1.
- **Acknowledge that economic or financial abuse can have long-lasting effects and must be considered as part of an assessment.** Victims should be made aware of specialist support and advice options www.survivingeconomicabuse.org . If they are paying off debts their ability to afford a tenancy may be affected.
- **Empower victims by providing information about their housing options**, being realistic about options available and time scales, can support people to make informed choices about their next steps, and take their first step towards taking back control of their future.
- **Publicise support pathways for victims of domestic abuse** and make information about how to access domestic abuse support easily accessible, in a format that best suits their needs. We will review these pathways regularly to ensure that the information remains up-to-date, and to identify opportunities to increase provision where necessary. There is easy read information by [IDAS](#), [audiobooks](#) on keeping safe, and further information in various formats including a British Sign Language video on the [GOV.UK website](#). Specialist support is available for children who have been affected by domestic abuse including therapeutic support where appropriate <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/womenandgirls/vawg-services/> .
- **Work closely with local specialist domestic abuse services and agencies** (such as the Police and Probation Service) to provide a co-ordinated response to domestic abuse by making referrals where necessary, ensuring a suitable representative attends and contributes to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), being active contributors in the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination process of identifying and tackling serial perpetrators of domestic abuse perpetrators (MATAC) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and being active contributors to the North

Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership, the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the Joint Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy Delivery Group.

- **Create opportunities for cross-working, collaboration, and breaking down barriers** to supporting victims by communicating regularly with local services, attending events and joint working.
- **We will work with specialist services** (known as by and for services) who are experts at supporting individuals with protected characteristics and specific cultural needs.
- **Maintain flexibility and a victim-centred approach** because we know that no two experiences of domestic abuse are the same. Our employees will use this policy, procedures, and guidance documents and/or advice from senior officers and Domestic Abuse Champions, the Police and specialist domestic abuse services to ensure that they respond appropriately to domestic abuse.
- **Consider intersectionality** as people may have more than one protected characteristic, neurodiversity or previous experience of trauma which may affect their experience of domestic abuse and their ability to access services and their trust in statutory services.
- **Create 'safety at home' for victims of domestic abuse who wish to stay within their home** through working with the Police and partner agencies to create a safety plan, consider the use of [legal measures](#) to remove the perpetrator from the property (such as Non-Molestation Orders), and/or providing panic alarms, locks, and additional security measures. Our commissioned service [IDAS](#) can discuss this as part of a holistic needs assessment.
- **Support victims who wish to relocate** because it is not safe, or preferable for them to not remain at their address because of domestic abuse, by providing guidance and assisting their move to alternative accommodation which is legally [suitable](#) if a homeless application is taken.
- **State that perpetrating domestic abuse is unacceptable and take appropriate action to hold perpetrators accountable.** We will communicate this message to our tenants. We reserve the right to take enforcement action against North Yorkshire Council tenants, using the powers available under the Housing Act, up to and including terminating a tenancy, for domestic abuse related offences. When taking any action against perpetrator/s, we will prioritise the safety and wishes of their victim/s and ensure that their wishes and housing needs are considered.
- **Refer perpetrators to specialist support when it is appropriate to do so**, because we recognise that long-term domestic abuse prevention requires behavioural change from those who cause harm. We believe in referring perpetrators, and those concerned about their behaviour or that of someone they know, to specialist services who can help them to change, when it is safe and appropriate to do so without increasing risk to the victim/s, [Foundation](#) are our local experts. Information about how to recognise abusive behaviour, and how to access support if you or someone you know is acting abusively is included at the end of this document, as **Appendix 3**. There are occasions where children

can also be abusive, and we will refer to specialist agencies for appropriate support for those affected.

- **Continually strive to improve our response to domestic abuse and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)** by seeking opportunities to receive feedback from victims and survivors and taking note of learnings from the [Domestic Homicide Review](#) (DHR) process. As of 2022, we are working towards accreditation from the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#) (DAHA) because we want to provide our residents, tenants, leaseholders, and members with an exemplary response to domestic abuse.

7.0 Confidentiality and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

7.1 Any information related to domestic abuse will be treated with sensitivity, and if it is recorded, it will be stored securely on our systems in accordance with [GDPR](#). We will maintain confidentiality and prioritise gaining consent from victims before making referrals or taking further action, as far as it is practicable to do so.

7.2 We may have to share information with agencies such as the [Police](#) or [North Yorkshire Council](#) if an adult, with care and support needs is at risk of, or experiencing abuse or neglect, or a [child is at serious risk of harm](#). An adult [safeguarding concern](#) may be raised without consent, if you are concerned about an adult, (with care and support needs) and there is a vital interest, risk to life or it is in the public interest as others at risk, or if there was a concern that the person lacked mental capacity to consent, their capacity had been assessed and it was in their best interests. For more information, please visit <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/adult-care/safeguarding/safeguarding-vulnerable-adults>.

7.3 If an instance of domestic abuse meets the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) risk threshold or if there are child protection concerns, we have a legal duty to share information with relevant partner agencies in the interest of reducing risk to those concerned. <https://www.northyorkshire.police.uk/police-forces/north-yorkshire-police/areas/about-us/marac/>

8.0 Consultation

8.1 We involved employees from across our organisation, including those with lived experience of domestic abuse, when developing this policy. We also consulted with key staff across the council including specialists in safeguarding and local statutory and non-statutory agencies. We worked with members of our Local Domestic Abuse Partnership and sought feedback from the national specialist agency the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and consulted local specialist domestic abuse support services. All of the feedback which we received during consultation was used to improve and adapt the

original draft document and provide clarity on the support the council will provide to victims of domestic abuse.

9.0 Links to other policies and policy review expectations

9.1 We will review this policy, related strategy, and information sources every three years at minimum to ensure that it aligns with changes in research, national legislation, policies and local support and service provision.

9.2 We may also review this policy in response to (but not limited to): employee and resident/tenant/leaseholder feedback; local [Domestic Homicide Review](#); Serious Case Review and Safeguarding Adult Review recommendations and findings.

9.3 This policy can be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, and City of York, available at North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Website, via this link:
<https://safeguardingadults.co.uk/working-with-adults/nysab-procedures/>
- North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures [NYSCP \(safeguardingchildren.co.uk\)](#)
- [Common Allocations Policy](#)
- [Multi-Agency Information Sharing Protocol](#)
- [North Yorkshire and City of York Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2028](#)

9.4 We recognise the need to align this policy with the legislative framework set out by the following:

by the following:

- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Care Act 2014 and Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2024.
- Civil partnership Act 2004
- Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Housing Act 1996, Part 7 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Protection of Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Housing Act 1985 and 1996
- Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations 2022

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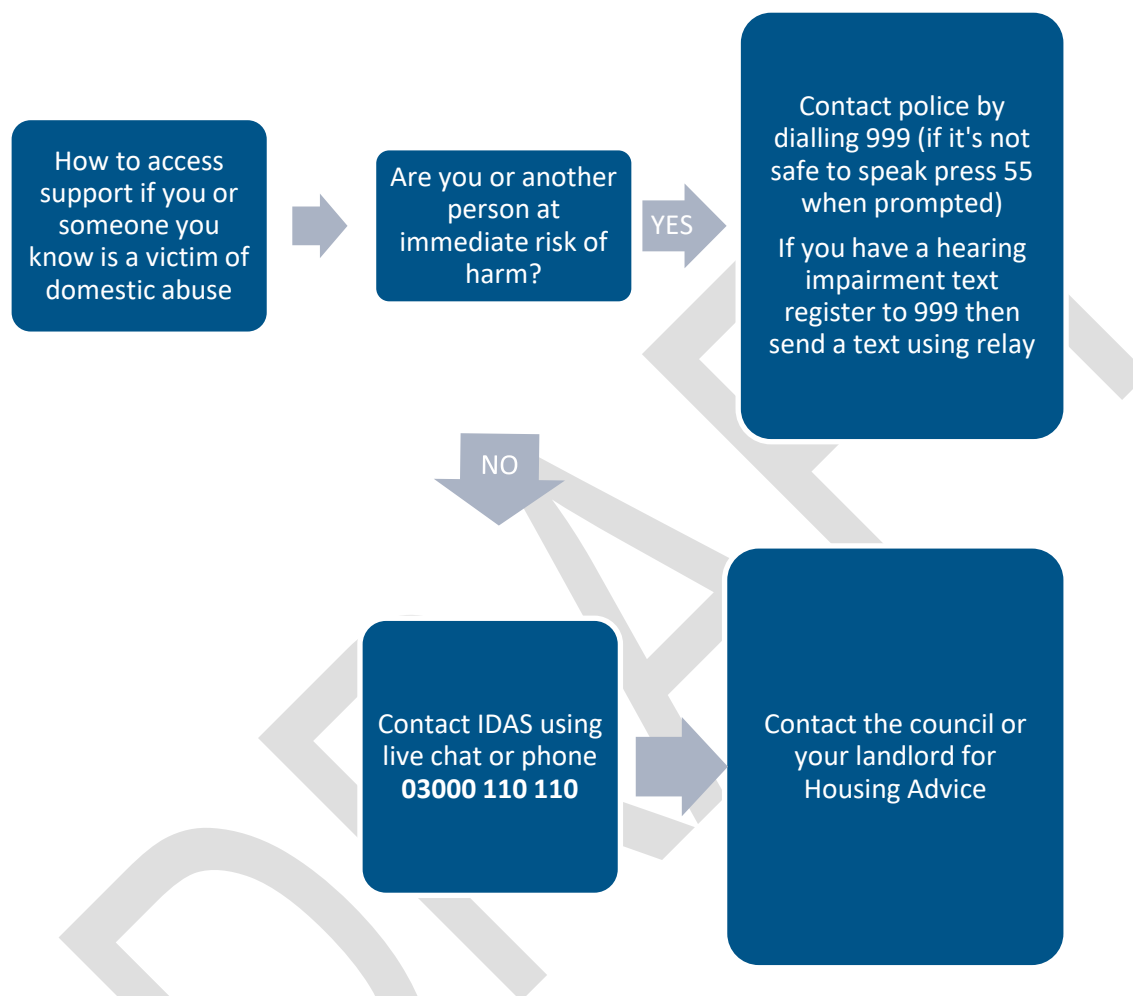
Appendix 1 Our Standards for Responding to Domestic Abuse

We recognise that it can be difficult to share personal experiences of domestic abuse. If you believe that you are a victim of domestic abuse, and you decide to share your experience with us, you can also expect:

- To be listened to, your wishes acknowledged and to be treated in a non-judgemental and empathetic manner.
- We will meet your requests to speak with an employee of the same (or different, according to your preferences) gender and/or sexual orientation, as far as is reasonably practicable.
- To be able to discuss your concerns at the time that you make contact, if it is safe and possible for you to do so. Where there is a need to refer to another service area or employee/s, domestic abuse disclosures will be treated as a priority, and you can expect to speak with a suitable employee within 24 hours at most.
- The North Yorkshire Council staff you speak with, to consider your personal safety before engaging in any discussion of your situation, by asking you whether it is a safe and appropriate time to talk, and to plan to speak with you alone.
- If the employee that you disclose your experience to, is within a service area that will be unable to meet these expectations or limited in the follow up support that they can provide, (such as Customer Services), they will arrange for you to discuss your situation further with an employee from a relevant service area.
- Where appropriate staff will discuss basic safety planning with you.
- If it is not safe or appropriate for you to discuss your situation at the time that you make contact, the employee should make arrangements for further discussion at a time, and in a way, that is safe, appropriate, and in accordance with your wishes, for example by arranging to meet with you in a mutually agreed location, or continuing the discussion at another time or via an alternative contact method.
- For an impartial interpreter to be made available and/or for other accommodations to be made if English is not your first language, and to provide support for any other literacy or support needs that may impact your ability to communicate effectively.
- To receive a relevant and supportive response that prioritises your wishes and your safety
- For the North Yorkshire Council employee/s you speak with to consider any associated safeguarding risks and escalate any concerns through our Safeguarding processes, including to any relevant partner agencies where it is necessary and appropriate to do so.

Appendix 2 How to access domestic abuse support if you are or have been a victim of domestic abuse

The following flowchart outlines the domestic abuse referral pathways that are currently recommended by North Yorkshire Council:



Additional Support is Available from the following organisations: -

- [Childline](http://www.childline.org.uk) – 0800 1111 - support for children - www.childline.org.uk
- [Citizens advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) - 0800 144 8848 - www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk) - 0800 2000247 - free 24 hr helpline - www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- [Galop](http://www.galop.org.uk) – 0800 9995428 - support for LGBT+ experiencing domestic abuse – www.galop.org.uk
- [GOV.UK's Forced Marriage Unit](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage#contact) – 0207 0080151- public helpline - www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage#contact

- [GOV.UK website](#) for easy read, information in languages other than English and British Sign Language
- [Halo](#) – 01642 683045 - advice about forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation - www.haloproject.org.uk
- [Hourglass](#) – 0808 8088141 - support for older people – www.wearehourglass.org
- [Independent Domestic Abuse Services](#) (IDAS) 03000 110110
- – specialist support agency in Yorkshire - <https://idas.org.uk/>
- [Karma Nirvana](#) – 0800 5999247 - national honour-based abuse helpline – www.karmanirvana.org.uk
- [Loving Me](#) – 07902 478958 - Domestic Abuse Service Support for trans and non-binary victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence www.lovingme.uk
- [Men's Advice Line UK](#) – 0808 8010327 – for male victims of domestic abuse – www.mensadvice.org.uk
- [NSPCC](#) - 0808 8005000 – advice for anyone concerned about child abuse - www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe
- [National Stalking Helpline](#) – 0808 8020300 – advice for anyone affected by stalking - www.suzylamplugh.org/refer-someone-to-us
- [North Yorkshire Fire Service](#) – provide fire safety advice - <https://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk/your-safety/book-a-visit/domestic-abuse-arson-threat-referral/>
- [North Yorkshire Council Housing Advice](#) – 0300 1312131 – advice about your housing options – www.northyorks.gov.uk
- [North Yorkshire Police](#) – co-ordination (MARAC) Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences where there is a high risk of domestic abuse identified <https://www.northyorkshire.police.uk/police-forces/north-yorkshire-police/areas/about-us/marac/>
- [North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#) - one-minute guides are available on various topics including Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Stalking Protection orders. [Audiobooks](#) on keeping safe from abuse – www.safeguardingadults.co.uk
- [Refuge](#) - 0800 2000247 - support for women and their children affected by domestic abuse - <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en>
- [Relay](#) - enables people with hearing or speech impairment to contact emergency services – www.relayuk.bt.com
- [Respect](#) – 0808 8024040 – confidential support for men to stop violence - www.respect.org.uk
- [Revenge Porn Helpline](#) - 0345 6000 459 – support for adults experiencing intimate image abuse www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk
- [Sexual Assault Referral Centre](#) - Bridge House – 0300 2230099 confidential healthcare and support for people in York or North Yorkshire who have experienced sexual assault or rape www.bridgehousesarc.org
- [Surviving Economic Abuse](#) – support and advice about financial abuse and information about [how financial institutions can provide support](#) www.survivingeconomicabuse.org
- [Vesta](#) – 0754 5075093 - advice about domestic abuse for the Polish community www.vestasfs.org

- [Victim Support – 0808 1689111 – provide specialist advice for victims of domestic abuse - https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/)
- [Women's Aid](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) – national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children – website has comprehensive advice and links to specialist support www.womensaid.org.uk

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Appendix 3 How to access support if you are concerned about your own behaviour, or that of someone you know

We understand that it may be difficult to recognise and acknowledge that you, or someone you know is acting, or has acted abusively. We have put together the following checklist to help you recognise abusive behaviours:

Mental / emotional abuse

If you are being mentally or emotionally abusive towards someone, you might be:

- Criticising
- Using language designed to humiliate
- Blaming
- Intimidating and threatening
- Destroying their personal belongings
- Telling them that they are mad
- Telling them that you are not being abusive

Threatening behaviours

Using threatening behaviour towards someone includes making threats to:

- Take their children away
- Have their children taken away by Social Care or other people
- Have them deported
- Have them sectioned
- Abuse your victim's children, family, friends, or pets
- Kill them
- Commit suicide
- Hurt your victim and/or their loved ones
- Stalk them (any of which could be in person, via phone call, email, or text message)

Intimidation and isolation

You could be intimidating and/or isolating someone if you:

- Repeatedly criticise them
- Tell them that they are ugly / worthless / useless
- Prevent them from having contact with family and friends
- Humiliate them in front of others
- Give them a curfew or otherwise monitor or limit their activities

- Stop or monitor their phone calls/text messages/emails

Psychological abuse

Psychological abuse could be:

- Acting jealously
- Blaming them for causing the abuse
- Lying to them
- Manipulating them to get them to do what you want
- Ignoring them
- Undermining or confusing them
- Telling them that they are losing their mind

Financial/ Economic abuse

Being financially abusive to someone includes:

- Building up debt in their name
- Withholding money from them
- Stealing money from them
- Limiting or preventing them from having access to money
- Not letting them work
- Using family money for alcohol / drugs
- Claiming and keeping their benefits
- Selling their possessions
- Not paying child support
- Refusing to pay bills
- Forcing them to earn money for you/ another person
- Threatening to report them to the Benefits Agency or other authorities

Sexual abuse

Whether in a relationship or not, if someone does not want to have sex, they do not have to. If you are forcing someone against their will, then you are being abusive.

Sexual abuse includes:

- Rape
- Forcing someone to engage in sexual acts
- Degrading treatment
- Sexual name-calling
- Forcing someone to prostitute themselves
- Making someone wear clothes that they haven't chosen

- Forcing someone to take part in or look at pornographic images
- Forcing someone to have sexual relationships with other people

Violence/Physical abuse

Violence and physical abuse includes:

- Hitting/punching/kicking/biting/shoving/burning someone
- Spitting at someone
- Using Non-fatal strangulation as a means of controlling someone or creating fear
- Pulling their hair
- Making physical threats to harm someone
- Using or threatening to use weapons to harm someone
- Forcing someone to use drugs and/or alcohol
- Depriving someone of sleep
- Hurting someone's pet
- Excessively invading someone's space

If you are concerned about your own behaviour, or that of someone close to you, we would encourage you to contact the [Police](#), [North Yorkshire Council](#) to raise a safeguarding concern, or a suitable support service.

In North Yorkshire, Foundation run the +Choices program telephone 01904 557491 or email foundationdapp@foundationuk.org. For more information visit their website <https://www.foundationuk.org/team/choices-domestic-abuse-perpetrator-programme/>.

Respect is a national charity which runs a helpline 0808 8024040 <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/> and supports people to change their behaviour.