

Customer Domestic Abuse Policy

Responsible Officer	Assistant Director Housing
This policy is applicable to	All Karbon Homes directorates including any subsidiary companies.
Approved by	Karbon Management Team (KMT)
Date approved	30 th March 2023
Frequency of review	Every 3 years
Date of next review	March 2026
Implementation date	3 rd May 2023
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations Policy • Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure • Caution Alert Policy • CCTV Policy • Complaints and Compliments Policy • Customer Service Standards • Data Protection Policy • Domestic Abuse Procedure • Estate Management Policy • Equality and Diversity Policy • Hate Crime and Harassment Policy • Karbon Tenancy Agreements • Safeguarding Policy • Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy • Any relevant procedure or appendices that accompany the above policies.
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 • ADASS Adult Safeguarding & Domestic Abuse-Guide to Support Practitioners & Managers (2017) • Care Act 2014 • Clare's Law/Domestic Abuse Offender Disclosure Scheme (DVDS). • Civil Partnership Act, 2004 • Crime and Disorder Act 1998 • Criminal Justice Act 2003 • Data Protection Act 1998

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse Act 2021 • Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance July 2022 • Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004 • Equality Act 2010 • Family Law Act 1996 • Gender Recognition Act 2000 • Housing Acts (1985, 1988, 1996, 2004) • HM Government: Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy & Action Plan • Human Rights Act 1998 • Police & Justice Act 2006 • Policing and Crime Act 2009 • Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 • Protection from Harassment Act 1997 • Serious Crime Act 2015 • Stalking Protection Act 2019 • Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) agenda.
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Version Control			
Version (see note 1)		Changed sections	Insert name and job title
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (see note 2)	Initial /Full	EIA Date 1 st March 2023	Laurie Edmundson Community Safety Manager Kelly Taylor Assistant Director Housing
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) (see note 2)	Initial /Full	DPIA Date 1 st March 2023	Laurie Edmundson Community Safety Manager Kelly Taylor Assistant Director Housing

Document change history		
Version	Date	Changed sections

Consultation	
Consultation Group (if applicable)	Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Staff	February 2023 Housing, BCT, 54North, Safer Communities Officers, Income, Lettings and Supported teams
Union(s)	N/A
Customers	February 2023
Human Resources / Organisation Development	February 2023 Inclusion and Belonging Strategic Lead
Health and Safety Working Group	N/A
Data Protection	N/A
Other stakeholder (please state)	N/A

Policy statement

Karbon Homes is committed to supporting any person who is experiencing domestic abuse. We will work closely with our partner agencies to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are put in place, and that the victim's rights and wishes are respected.

We recognise that the safety of the victim, children and their family is paramount, and we will do all we can to ensure that they are protected.

Risk policy is designed to control

To ensure our customers feel safe and secure in their homes and feel confident to report Domestic Abuse to Karbon Homes.

Key performance measures

Number of Domestic Abuse cases monthly and quarterly

Definitions

Definitions relating to this policy are important and therefore embedded within the main body of the document.

Abbreviations

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)
Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordinating (MATAC)
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

1.0 Purpose of policy

- 1.1 We are committed to maintaining thriving, safe communities, and we recognise that domestic abuse can have a devastating impact upon its victims.
- 1.2 A large proportion of our staff are in regular contact with our customers, either on the telephone, in our offices or in their homes, and are in a position where they may be able to identify the signs of domestic abuse and offer the appropriate help. Alternatively, a customer may make a disclosure that they are the victim of domestic abuse, and our staff must be able to deal with that disclosure appropriately.
- 1.3 This policy outlines Karbon's approach to assisting and supporting any person experiencing domestic abuse.
- 1.4 Karbon also recognises that staff may be experiencing domestic abuse and are committed to supporting them in any way that they can. Please refer to our separate policy and guidance as part of our staff support package.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 We believe that our customers should not live in fear of or with violence, abuse, coercive control or harassment from a partner, former partner, or any member of their household or family.
- 2.2 Anyone reporting domestic abuse to Karbon will be treated in a confidential, empathetic, supportive and non-judgmental way. Any disclosure of abuse will be believed, taken seriously, and advice and support will be given as a priority.
- 2.3 Karbon has a holistic, whole housing approach to dealing with domestic abuse and will work with statutory and voluntary organisations to support victims, and to take action against perpetrators (where this is safe and appropriate). We will:

- Ensure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate support as a matter of priority.
- Ensure that our staff are trained to deal with disclosures of domestic abuse effectively.
- Support people, of any gender, who are experiencing abuse, or have experienced abuse, by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- Provide options to victims of domestic abuse so that they are empowered to make their own decisions about what they would like to happen next and can make informed choices.
- Encourage victims to report domestic abuse and reassure them that they will be supported.
- Offer caseworkers of the same gender for victims where requested, as some customers may feel more comfortable discussing their situation with a member of the same gender.
- Support those customers with any protected characteristics, including but not limited to LGBT, black and minoritised victims to access specialised support and information.
- Ensure that where children or young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too are safe and have access to services as soon as possible.
- Make appropriate safeguarding and any other necessary referrals if we believe that a child or an adult is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
- Support victims to make decisions around their housing needs, whether they wish to remain in their home or to move to a new home.
- Signpost victims to where they can access help with the use of civil and criminal laws. This can offer them protection and prevent further abuse.
- Support victims to take appropriate legal measures to protect themselves and their families.
- Take action and/or support victims to take action, where they chose to do so, against perpetrators.
- Support the victim in whatever decision they make. Whilst we might not understand their decision, if they decide to stay with or return to an abuser it is important they are made aware that they can come back and speak to Karbon and we will provide support.
- Signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse to agencies who can offer them support and interventions to try and prevent the abuse reoccurring.
- Recognise that domestic abuse is a gendered crime and support the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda.

2.4 When dealing with domestic abuse full consideration will be given to our safeguarding responsibilities, details of which are included in Karbon's Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy.

3.0 Policy detail

The Statutory Definition of Domestic Abuse:

3.1 We have set out below the relevant provisions of articles 1-3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 below:

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 1 introduces the first statutory definition of domestic abuse:

Section 1 Definition of “domestic abuse”

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:
 - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:
 - (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4))
 - (e) psychological, emotional, or other abuseand it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- (4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to:
 - (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or

(b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

(7) For the meaning of "personally connected", see section 2.

Section 2 Definition of "personally connected"

(1) For the purposes of this Act, two people are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies:

(a) they are, or have been, married to each other

(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other

(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))

(g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

(a) the person is a parent of the child, or

(b) the person has parental responsibility for the child

(3) In this section:

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years
- “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act)
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Section 3 Children as victims of domestic abuse

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if:

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section:

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act)
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

3.2 Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance aim to improve the response of the Housing sector to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of a set of standards of good practice. Karbon have adopted the key values and principles set out by DAHA and its Guidance in its approach to domestic abuse cases.

3.3 Definitions of abuse

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse**
Physical abuse can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking and poisoning.
- **Sexual abuse**
Sexual abuse can include: rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.
- **Economic or Financial abuse**
Economic abuse can include: controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all of their expenditure, running up debts in the victim's name, allowing the victim no say on how their monies are spent, refusing to allow them to work.
- **Psychological and Emotional abuse**
Psychological and emotional abuse can have a profound impact on victims. It can leave them with little confidence that they can do anything to change their situation, or that they are powerless to take any action to improve their lives, or the lives of their children. Examples include:
 - Isolating the victim – not allowing them to see their friends or family, or to go anywhere on their own.
 - Using threats – threats to kill their family, children, friends, or pets, or to find them if they were ever to try and leave.
 - Putting them down – humiliating, embarrassing, or undermining them in front of others, telling them that they are stupid and that no one would believe them if they tried to tell people what was happening, or that they are a bad parent.
- **Technological abuse**
Perpetrators can use technology or social media as a means of controlling and coercing victims. This can include: using social media to harass the victim,

controlling emails or social media accounts, use of spyware such as tracking apps, hidden cameras, using home assistants such as “Alexa” and “Google Home” to monitor someone’s movements.

- **Elder abuse**

Research has found that domestic abuse is experienced by both women and men regardless of age, disability and ethnic background. Elder abuse can be even more detrimental to a victim’s wellbeing due to problems with mobility, mental health and social isolation. Older people may have come to accept some aspects of domestic abuse as the ‘norm’, dependent on their generation. For example, in the past the male of the relationship was traditionally seen as the breadwinner and thus would have control over their finances, and limit their partner’s access to money.

- **Family and intergenerational abuse**

Domestic abuse approaches historically have had an emphasis on partner violence. More focus is now being given to family and intergenerational abuse, and the way in which it may be different from partner violence; for example, if the perpetrator is the victim’s (adult) sibling, child or grandchild.

Abuse of an adult or a child may also be used by a perpetrator to exercise control over their victim.

3.4 **Coercive and Controlling behaviour**

In September 2012 the Government published definitions and guidance to help prosecutors understand the nature and features of controlling or coercive behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Controlling behaviour is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Examples of controlling behaviour may include a person:

- Controlling who their victim sees, or what they wear
- Controlling their medication, or preventing them from seeing medical professionals such as doctors or dentists

- Isolating them from friends, family or other means of support
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Economic or financial abuse
- Threats to hurt or kill
- Preventing them from having access to transport or from working;
- Threats or physically harming family pets;
- Damage to household goods
- Repeatedly putting them down or telling them they are worthless
- Encouraging them to self-harm
- Threats to harm a child
- Threats to reveal or publish private information

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship. An offence is committed by A if:

An offence is committed by A if:

- A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person, B, that is controlling or coercive; and
- At time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected; and
- The behaviour has a serious effect on B; and
- A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

A and B are 'personally connected' if:

- they are in an intimate personal relationship; or
- they live together and are either members of the same family; or
- they live together have previously been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.

There are two ways in which it can be proved that A's behaviour has a 'serious effect' on B:

- If it causes B to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them - s.76 (4)(a); or
- If it causes B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities - s.76 (4) (b).

For the purposes of this offence, behaviour must be engaged in 'repeatedly' or 'continuously'. Another, separate, element of the offence is that it must have a 'serious effect' on someone and one way of proving this is that it causes someone to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them.

There is no specific requirement in the Act that the activity should be of the same nature. The prosecution should be able to show that there was intent to control or coerce someone.

The phrase 'substantial adverse effect on Bs usual day-to-day activities' may include, but is not limited to:

- Stopping or changing the way someone socialises
- Physical or mental health deterioration
- A change in routine at home including those associated with mealtimes or household chores
- Changes to work patterns, employment status or routes to work
- Changes to a child's attendance record at school
- Putting in place measures at home to safeguard themselves or their children

3.5 **So-called honour-based violence and abuse**

So-called honour-based abuse includes offences which may have been committed to protect the perceived honour of a family or a community, and can incorporate many of the types of abuse detailed above. It is often carried out by family members, but victims can also come under pressure from the wider community who will seek to support the family in their actions.

3.6 So-called honour based violence and abuse can include:

- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation

3.7 **Modern Day Slavery**

3.8 Modern slavery can encompass slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

3.9 Stalking

3.10 Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes a person feel scared, distressed, or threatened. There are different types of stalking and harassment, and anyone can be a victim. Stalking and harassment are criminal offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

3.11 It is generally a pattern of behaviour directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress.

Examples of stalking behaviours can include:

- Repeated, unwanted phone calls, texts, messages that may or may not be threatening.
- Creating fake profiles to continue contacting a person after they have been blocked on their personal account.
- Observing, following or “coincidentally” showing up wherever the person goes.
- Loitering in any place.
- Watching or spying on a person.

3.12 Barriers and challenges to ending abusive relationships

3.13 Karbon recognises that victims will often find it extremely difficult to make a disclosure and ask for help. It is vitally important, therefore, that if a disclosure is made, it is dealt with in an understanding, sensitive and supportive manner.

3.14 We have specialist staff who are trained on how to manage these situations to ensure that they are able to provide all of the appropriate advice, gather the vital information they need to safeguard the victim, and put the correct support in place.

3.15 Staff across the wider business are provided guidance on how to respond initially to becoming aware of a situation involving domestic abuse and what they should and should not do until the specialist officers have been in contact with the victim.

3.16 It is important to understand that victims may not seek, or respond to, offers of help and may wish to remain in their abusive relationship. Reasons for this may include:

- Fear of the abuser and/or what they will do
- Lack of awareness or knowledge of other victims who have successfully left an abusive partner
- Doubt about the impact of any action taken by Police or the Courts, and fear of pressure to pursue a criminal case
- Lack of knowledge/access to support services
- Lack of resources, financial or otherwise
- Fear of not being believed

- Love, loyalty, attachment towards their partner and the hope that they will change
- Feelings of shame or failure
- Pressure from family/children/friends
- Religious or cultural expectations
- Long term effects of abuse e.g., self-neglect, depression, low self-esteem
- Drug and/or alcohol addiction
- Anticipated impact on children, or fear of losing contact with children/other relatives/friends
- Fear of not being able to take pets with them

3.17 People from black and minoritised communities may also have additional barriers, including:

- Language barriers
- Perceived family honour, shame, or stigma
- Fear of rejection by their community
- Immigration status/no recourse to public funding
- Racism (perceived or actual)
- Cultural or community expectations
- Fear of so- called 'honour' based violence
- Lack of appropriate services

3.18 People with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and more likely to be at high risk of serious harm. Barriers to those with disabilities accessing services can include:

- Lack of accessible information about abuse and legal rights
- Lack of accessible domestic abuse services
- Fear that interpreters (for example, British Sign Language) may not keep confidentiality
- Assumptions that physical and sensory impairments prevent people from making their own decisions
- Being used to 'dependency' and a lack of respect and dignity, leading to them assuming that abuse is normal and minimising its impact
- Fear of having to live in a care home
- Reliance on the abuser for care and support
- The victim may be the carer of the abuser, and feel a sense of obligation to maintain the support and endure the abuse
- The abuser may be the only person with whom the victim has any contact

3.19 Safety and Security

- 3.20 Where appropriate, housing requirements and options will be discussed with every person experiencing domestic abuse. Officers will make every effort to ensure that a safe and secure environment is provided for them and their families, and will work alongside specialist agencies to provide advice and assistance.
- 3.21 Karbon Homes can provide victims with some small items of personal security equipment such as personal alarms. Other security may be offered such as window and door alarms in order to try and provide some reassurance and peace of mind.
- 3.22 We may also consider carrying out further security measures such as, but not limited to dusk until dawn lights, additional door or window locks, or lockable letterplates where appropriate and if required.
- 3.23 Not all circumstances will allow or warrant these requirements and in some instances we will not offer all the options to all case situations and we will discuss this openly with victims.
- 3.24 Karbon may also make referrals to partner agencies such as the Police, the Local Authority or the local Fire Service for additional security or where a much greater level of home security is required (or where security is required as a matter of extreme urgency).
- 3.25 Large scale works to enhance the safety and security of a property, may be desirable in some instances. We will give consideration to these but may not always be able to offer them. These will be discussed on a case by case basis and will require approval.
- 3.26 Whilst it is desirable to have crime reference numbers where victims require lock changes or repairs as a result of domestic abuse, we appreciate that in certain instances this may not be possible. We will always consider if the cost is rechargeable and discuss this with the victims.

3.27 Housing needs and options

- 3.28 A person experiencing domestic abuse may be able to remain in their own home, if it is safe to do so. However, there may be occasions where temporary accommodation is required whilst safety measures are being put in place. Karbon do not offer temporary accommodation but will provide advice and support on how to access this type of accommodation.
- 3.29 We will help victims consider all options where the need for a temporary or permanent move is required. This will include advice on their tenancy rights and all housing options available relating to re-housing including Choice Based Lettings,

private rented sector and other housing associations. Local Authorities have a Statutory Duty to assess victims and their families of domestic abuse.

- 3.30 Specialist agencies can also provide immediate sanctuary/refuge accommodation for victims fleeing domestic abuse.
- 3.31 Karbon Homes do not have readily available properties and advertise all prospective empty homes at the first opportunity. Victims of domestic abuse will be supported to apply through the relevant housing schemes with Local Authorities in a bid to obtain a property, regardless if this is Karbon stock or not to ensure that victims have the widest possible opportunity for rehousing.
- 3.32 Karbon customers with rent arrears will not be prevented from accessing suitable rehousing options when faced with domestic abuse. However, rent arrears will be disclosed and may prevent offers of rehousing by providers. We will work with those victims to understand the financial position they find themselves in and how best they can reasonably address this. Customers are still liable for any rent arrears, but we may halt legal action until we fully understand the situation.
- 3.33 We will check the tenancy status of the victim and perpetrator to identify whether the tenancies are held jointly or solely. Where there is a joint tenancy, we will discuss the options available. Victims may wish to seek independent legal advice in these instances. There are some options available to those in a joint tenancy but we will speak with those involved and make decisions on a case by case basis.
- 3.34 Where a relationship has broken down as a result of domestic abuse, and there is a joint tenancy, Karbon Homes may offer to assign the tenancy to one or other tenant if both parties agree, and if it is safe to do so, thereby ending the joint tenancy and reallocating the property as a sole tenancy.
- 3.35 Karbon Homes reserves the right to rely upon statutory grounds for possession such as Ground 14A Housing Act 1988 in the appropriate circumstances, i.e. where a resident has had to leave a property due to violence or threats of violence towards them by their partner or another member of the partner's family.
- 3.36 Where the tenancy is in the perpetrators name, advice will be offered to the victim and they will be referred to the relevant Local Authority. Each Local Authority has a responsibility to provide immediate temporary accommodation.
- 3.37 Where the tenancy is in the sole name of a victim of domestic abuse then we will provide guidance on the options available to them. If the victim wants the perpetrator to leave the home, then we will provide support to them, in conjunction with external partners e.g.: Police.
- 3.38 Often a request to leave will be resisted by the perpetrator, especially if it is a family home and may also heighten the risk of further abuse. Karbon Homes will work closely with the victim to manage and risk assess each situation.

4.0 Use of tools and powers

- 4.1 Every case of domestic abuse will be assessed on its own circumstances, taking into account the wishes and needs of the victim, the severity of the abuse, and any additional criminality.
- 4.2 A victim will be provided with information for specialist agencies who can advise and act on the legal remedies available to use against a perpetrator and will be supported by Karbon staff.
- 4.3 Karbon Homes will make use of any appropriate tools and powers available to us, as a housing provider, to tackle those who are perpetrators of domestic abuse. These may include the use of any relevant tenancy sanctions, injunctions and possession proceedings.
- 4.4 Karbon Homes will enforce the conditions of a tenancy agreement, where the tenancy agreement allows us to do so.
- 4.5 Any action taken by Karbon Homes will be based upon the victims' wishes, level of risk and professional judgement. The level of risk will be reviewed at various intervals, including new incidents of domestic abuse and/or escalation in the seriousness of the abuse or any new danger posed to the victim. Karbon Homes are aware that the level of risk usually escalates when a victim decides to end the relationship.
- 4.6 Perpetrators of domestic abuse can access specialist support if they acknowledge their behaviour, want to change and consent to a referral being made.
- 4.7 It is worth noting that not every victim will want to end their relationship, or will want to take enforcement action against the perpetrator. It is important, therefore, to manage risk and ensure that as many safeguards are in place as possible, and provide the victim with options as to what is available to them, to be used at any stage should they wish to do so.
- 4.8 As well as the tools and powers available to Karbon, we will also work closely with partners to ensure a holistic approach to tackling domestic abuse and that the tools and powers available to these partner agencies are fully considered.
- 4.9 Where appropriate Karbon will assist other agencies or partners and contribute to them obtaining orders which reduce domestic abuse.

5.0 Confidentiality

- 5.1 Any disclosure of domestic abuse will be treated in the strictest of confidence, unless we have a duty to disclose information in order to:
- Protect the victim
 - Prevent harm to someone else, or
 - Prevent or detect a crime
- 5.2 Whilst we understand privacy and confidentiality are important, meaning we are mindful of our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. Preventing, investigating and taking action around domestic abuse requires the ability to exchange information with statutory and non-statutory agencies.
- 5.3 Information or data sharing protocols will be in place with Police, Local Authorities and other partners, to protect all data which is shared.

6.0 Domestic Abuse Offender Disclosure Schemes (Clare's Law)

- 6.1 These schemes are administered by the Police and allow someone to make enquires about their partner if they are worried that they may have been abusive in the past. If Police checks show that there may be a risk, they will consider sharing the information. An application can be made directly by the affected person if they have a concern that they may be at risk of harm; or any concerned third party (such as parents or friends) can also make an application if they are concerned. However, if someone else applies, they would not receive the information; it would only be given to the person in the relationship, or someone who is in a position to protect them from the abuse.

6.2 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

- 6.3 High risk domestic abuse cases are heard at regular Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). They are attended by specialist approved members of staff by Karbon, representatives from other services including Police, health services, domestic abuse support services, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), and appropriate officers from the relevant Local Authority. All meetings are highly confidential. Information is shared and co-ordinated action plans agreed to manage the risk, safeguard the victim and their family, and to ensure that appropriate measures and support are put in place for the victim.
- 6.4 The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim. The MARAC will also make links with other agencies to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. At the heart of a MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The victim does not attend the meeting.

- 6.5 The MARAC Chair may direct that a safeguarding referral be made, if services are not already involved and it is felt that immediate action is needed to protect either a vulnerable adult, or any children living in an abusive household. Safeguarding investigations will take place outside of the MARAC process but partner agencies will remain involved, where appropriate
- 6.6 Any referrals to MARAC will be made after discussion with, and consent from, the victim. However, if consent is not granted and there is an immediate or potential risk (to the victim or the victim's children and family) a referral may be made without the consent of the victim to protect them and their children/family from potentially serious harm.
- 6.7 **Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordinating (MATAC)**
- 6.8 MATAC meetings discuss those couples/ families who include repeat perpetrators or victims, and who are deemed to be of medium risk. These meetings are attended by multi-agencies including the police, Local Authorities representatives, specialist support agencies and specialist approved members of Karbon staff. A co-ordinated set of actions will be determined. Dedicated officers carry out interventions and support with all parties with the aim of breaking the cycle of abuse and tackling the cause of the abusive behaviour.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are business, sector developments or significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.
- 7.2 Staff across Karbon will receive regular, mandatory, basic awareness training on domestic abuse, including how to spot the signs of abuse, and how to deal appropriately with a disclosure.
- 7.3 Specialist Officers who work directly with victims of domestic abuse will receive regular, mandatory training to ensure they are equipped with up to date knowledge and skills to work with and support those experiencing domestic abuse.
- 7.4 In addition, the group is committed to specialist trained officers who will be confident in advising both staff and customers on domestic abuse issues and be confident in all case management.
- 7.5 All staff will be given regular safeguarding training, and will be updated on any changes to policy, procedure or legislation around domestic abuse.
- 7.6 Karbon will also support any staff member adversely affected by dealing with any incidents of domestic abuse as part of our approach to staff welfare.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

- 8.1 This policy is applied in line with Karbon's Equality and Diversity Policy and the associated legislation including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010. At Karbon we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 8.2 However, we like to go even further. Beyond these protected characteristics we also take into consideration additional factors such as socio-economic status and language barriers which may also play a part. Our vision is for everyone to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect and access to our services.
- 8.3 To help us achieve this, we will work to improve accessibility for all, offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove any barriers. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 8.4 All of our customer policies and key information are made available on the Karbon Homes website. Reasonable adjustments that can help for example to make our information and services more accessible are sign language and language interpreters. We will work to improve accessibility for everybody that we deal with offering reasonable adjustments, adaptations and discussing ways that we can work to remove barriers that you may experience. A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things.
- 8.5 We work together to look at options and agree what adjustments would be reasonable in your individual circumstances. If you would like to find out more please get in touch with the team.
- 8.6 This policy and associated documents are available in different languages and alternative formats where necessary.

9.0 Data Protection and Privacy

- 9.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation.
- 9.2 This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.

- 9.3 Karbon Homes and partner agencies have signed up to the necessary Information Data Sharing Protocols that enables all involved to share appropriate and relevant information when dealing with cases of domestic abuse. This is in order to prevent or detect crime involving domestic abuse and conduct joint or multi-agency investigations. All information is shared in accordance with the protocol and within the terms of the relevant legislation.