



VALE OF AYLESBURY HOUSING TRUST

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, POLICY

Our Vision

To provide quality affordable homes and services, strengthen our communities and improve the lives of local people.

Our Values

Take our customers into the heart of all we do.
Raise standards and provide equality of opportunity for all.
Use our expertise to build communities we can be proud of.
Seek opportunities to create strong partnerships.
Think consistently of ways to improve and add value.
Ensure we invest in the potential of our employees.
Deliver our commitments.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to present a general policy on relationship breakdown and domestic violence, setting out the aims, principles and values that will be followed by the Trust in dealing with domestic violence, relationship breakdown and harassment.
- 1.2. The policy has been drafted having regard to the Trust's agreed vision and values, guidance material from the National Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation (HC), the HCs Regulatory Code, relevant legislation and existing policy.
- 1.3. The policy will be underpinned by detailed operational procedures, proposals for specific actions and plans to implement them and these will be formulated and developed in full consultation with both residents and staff as appropriate.

2. Statement of Intent

“Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust recognises the extreme difficulties which relationship breakdown can cause especially where children are involved. It will provide what support it can to such families. The Trust is committed to taking decisive action to tackle domestic violence. It will make full use of all forms of action that the law allows in order to protect the public and the victims of violence and intimidation.”

3. General Policy - Relationship Breakdown

- 3.1. Relationship breakdown raises issues for a landlord whether or not the partners undergoing the breakdown are joint tenants. It is also of relevance where the partners are lesbian or gay couples as well as heterosexual couples.
- 3.2. In many cases the Trust’s role will be confined to one of support and advice. There will however be cases, often involving children, and where the courts are involved, in which the Trust’s Housing Management procedures will need to vary the arrangements for tenancies in accordance with court orders and to protect the interests of children.
- 3.3. The general principle to be followed by the Trust will be that one unit of accommodation will be available to the parties in a relationship breakdown. In most cases this will be the home already occupied by the couple. Where children are involved this will almost always be to the parent who retains primary responsibility for the children (unless a court orders otherwise). In a few very exceptional circumstances the Trust will offer two homes to partners splitting up under a relationship breakdown, particularly where both have responsibility for children, or there are medical or other exceptional welfare needs involved.
- 3.4. Where violence has been a feature of the breakdown then the Domestic Violence policy will apply and not the Relationship Breakdown policy.

4. General Policy - Domestic Violence

- 4.1. This policy applies to circumstances where a resident or residents, of a Trust property are in fear of violence from another member of the household. It is most commonly perpetrated by men but may also be perpetrated by women and between gay and lesbian partners as well as heterosexual partners. The policy includes harassment, threats and intimidation as well as actual physical violence.

- 4.2. The Trust will take a victim-centred approach in responding to cases of domestic violence. The Trust recognises that the evidence of violence might not always be readily available and will accept the victim's account and will not insist on the victim providing proof of violence, (unless this is required in connection with legal action). Where it is the victims wish, the Trust will consider taking action to evict the perpetrators of domestic violence and will support the victim in pursuing action against the perpetrator under the criminal law.
- 4.3. The Trust's housing management staff will have suitable training to enable them to give advice to the victims of domestic violence. This will include possible legal remedies such as injunctions, housing options and other sources of advice and assistance such as the availability of places in local refuges. Housing management staff will also assist the victim to liaise with police and solicitors.
- 4.4. In circumstances where, in the opinion of the Trust, the victim cannot return to his or her home, we will consider whether it is appropriate to request temporary re-housing via the Council, offer a permanent management transfer to another Trust property, or seek an appropriate reciprocal re-housing arrangement with another social housing landlord. Any transfer will be to a property of the same size and of the same standard.

See Domestic Violence Policy and Procedures for further information on DV.

Policy Review Date: January 2009