

Sanctuary Scheme Policy 2024

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1.0 Scope

The Sanctuary Scheme Policy sets out the approach that Broxtowe Borough Council takes when a referral for assistance from the sanctuary scheme is received.

The policy and the Sanctuary Scheme as a whole is designed to assist survivors of domestic abuse stay in their homes.

The policy will apply to both Council tenants and tenanted properties but also properties in the private sector, those that belong to Registered Providers and owner occupiers.

For the purpose of the policy, any works that are done under the Sanctuary Scheme are;

- An addition or enhancement to what was in place at the property before the referral was made
- Carried out using the Sanctuary procedure and following a referral for assistance from the scheme
- Will have been assessed by an appropriate officer as being suitable and appropriate

2.0 Purpose

The Council works with survivors of domestic abuse to enable them to stay in their homes if they do not wish to move and to do so in a safe and sustainable way.

The Policy provides a framework for how requests will be processed and the steps that the Council should take when processing a request under the Sanctuary Scheme.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the policy are

- To outline how referrals are received for assistance from the Sanctuary Scheme and how they are made.
- To outline what factors are considered by the Council upon receiving a referral
- To outline what works can take place under the scheme and what works cannot
- To outline how the Council responds to referrers and survivors
- To outline how works are assessed and carried out

- To outline how other landlords may be consulted or worked in partnership with where required.

4.0 Regulatory Code and Legal Framework

The Housing Act 1985

The Housing Act 1996

Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Housing Act 2004 (Housing, Health and Safety Rating System)

Domestic Abuse, Crime and Victims Act 2004

5.0 Policy Outline

5.1 How referrals are made to or received by the Sanctuary Scheme

The Council will accept a referral from any person or agency for assistance from the Sanctuary Scheme. However, referrals are normally received from one of the partner agencies for domestic abuse case work, such as Juno, Broxtowe Womens Project, Women's Aid or similar.

AMENDMENT 04/2025 DUE TO CHANGE IN COUNTYWIDE PROCEDURES

In situations where self-referrals are made, these applications will be accepted, where the applicant is already engaged with or engages with a dedicated domestic abuse support service.

The Council no longer requires a DASH-RIC to be provided alongside the application however police incident numbers or information regarding reasons for the change in risk is necessary if there have been no recent incidents and/or no police involvement.

The Council will request where possible that its referral processes and procedures are completed by the referrer so it can best consider the request without further information being requested.

The requests will be processed by the Communities Team, coordinated by the Senior Communities Officer Violence and Domestic Abuse, to assess the referral and carry out a property evaluation (after receiving police checks on the perpetrator) to confirm what changes should be made to the property. These recommendations will then be sent to the Housing Repairs Team who will arrange works to be

completed. Both Teams may be required to communicate with the referrer or the survivor as appropriate.

The Council will assess whether further Housing Options advice is necessary when a referral is received, particularly where the abuse and risk is extreme.

It may be necessary for further information to be requested from the referrer or the survivor to assist the Council with assessing the request.

The Council aims to communicate with the referrer and the survivor in a responsive, sensitive and timely manner throughout the process.

Council Officers, The Police and Contractors will make 3 attempts to contact the applicant to arrange for assessments to be made or works to be completed where these go unanswered and unreturned the application will be closed due to insufficient resources.

5.2 What factors will be considered by the Council when a referral is received

The Council will consider the following when a referral is received

- The landlord and tenure of the property. It may be necessary to speak to other parties before completing works.
- The likely cost of the work and whether these are viable as opposed to other options
- Whether the works will draw further attention to the property
- Whether the works will change the structural nature and composition of the property
- Whether the works will leave the property potentially unsafe due to fire or other safety reasons
- Whether alternative solutions are preferable to those that are recommended or requested that reduce the risk equally
- Whether rehousing is more appropriate because of the risk level
- Whether temporary accommodation is more appropriate because of the risk level

5.3 What works will be routinely considered as part of the scheme and what works will not

The Council will routinely enable the following works as part of the Sanctuary Scheme. These works are regardless of tenure.

- Changes to locks and replacement keys
- Improvements to door security and letterboxes
- Improvements to window furniture such as window locks and keys where possible
- Ring doorbell or lifelines
- Improvements to exterior lighting
- Improvements to fencing and gates
- Replacement doors

(this list is not exhaustive)

The following works will not be considered as part of the Sanctuary Scheme. Where works are not considered part of the scheme, alternative solutions will be discussed. (Section 5.5)

- Installation of safe rooms or panic rooms
- Installation of bars, boarding up of or blocking up of any window or exit
- Installation of CCTV
- Any other referral that is contrary to any building regulation, housing health and safety regulation or fire regulation
- **Installation or repair of burglar alarms**

5.4 Communication and Liaison

The Council will keep the referrer and the survivor updated with the outcomes of the referral and when works will take place or what other solutions are being or could be considered.

Where staff of both genders are available and trained the Council will consider the wishes of the survivor and respect any preferences where possible regarding the gender of the member of staff that manages their referral and who contacts or visits them.

If works are refused and the referrer or survivor are not happy with the decision that has been made, an appeal can be made to the Manager to review the decision.

Where 3 attempts to contact the applicant by officers or contractors to arrange appointments go unanswered or unreturned the referrer will be contacted to discuss none engagement and the case closed where appropriate.

5.5 Alternative Solutions

The Communities Team can refer survivors to the Housing Options Team who will discuss alternative solutions if the Sanctuary works cannot go ahead with the referrer and survivor as appropriate.

Alternative solutions could include a homeless application, a referral to refuge accommodation, an offer of temporary accommodation or assistance in finding alternative permanent accommodation. The Housing Options Team will assist survivors by offering their advice and assistance to access the most appropriate option, depending on the survivor's circumstances.

5.6 Carrying out works under the Sanctuary Scheme

Following a referral being received that meets the criteria, the Council will arrange a visit to discuss the referral and assess the property as required. The Council has officers trained to make these assessments and recommendations so there is no need for a further referral to be made.

The Council will either use its own workforce or use appropriate and approved contractors to carry out the works within its own properties or on properties that are within the private sector.

The Council will aim to process the works as quickly as possible due to the severity and sensitivity of the issue.

5.7 Works in non-Council owned properties

The Sanctuary Scheme extends to works in properties that are owned and managed by the Council and the Housing Revenue Account as well as properties within the private sector, such as owner-occupied properties or within the private rented sector and also those that belong to and are managed by Registered Providers.

When there is another landlord involved, such as a private landlord or Registered Provider, the Council will advise that a request for works has been received and to seek clarity on whether there are any objections to the works from the landlord. The Council will discuss with the landlord any objections that they have or whether they wish to carry out works themselves.

The Council will make all reasonable provisions to ensure the confidentiality of the client is maintained by not disclosing the details of the referral.

6.0 Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Repairs Policy
- Repairs procedures
- Sanctuary Scheme Procedure
- South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy
- Domestic Abuse, Crime and Victims Act 2004

7.0 Review

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless there are significant changes in legislation.

8.0 Document History and Approval

Date	Version	Committee Name
Sept 20	1.0	Housing Committee
March 2024	2.0	Cabinet