

Domestic Abuse Policy



Reference: HS_POL_HOU_DOM_1.0

Author: Housing Services Manager

Scope: Housing Solutions

Approved by: Executive Team

Legislation: Domestic Abuse Act 2015
The Protection from Harassment act 1997
Family Law Act 1996
Data Protection Act 198
Equality Act 2010
Housing Act
Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014
Equality Act 2010
Employment Act 2008
Employment Tribunals (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) (Amended)
Employment Rights Act 1999
Employment Rights Act 1996
Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

Date of approval: April 2024

Regulatory/ Governance: Tenancy Standard, HSE, Health & Safety at work.

Date of next review: April 2027

Related Policies: Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
Allocations & transfers Policy
Vulnerable customers Policy
Safeguarding adults Policy
Safeguarding children Policy
Health & Safety Policy
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
ICT Acceptable Use Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Grievance Policy
Code of Conduct
Data Protection Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 We are committed to maintaining safe communities, and we recognise the effect that domestic abuse has on the quality of life of our residents and communities.
- 1.2 Many of our staff are in regular contact with our residents and so are in a position to identify signs of potential domestic abuse and can recognise, record, respond

and refer accordingly.

- 1.3 We are committed to supporting all those (including colleagues) who may be experiencing domestic abuse and will collaborate closely with our partner agencies to put the appropriate response in place, while respecting our residents' rights and wishes.
- 1.4 We recognise that the safety of our residents, their families and our colleagues is paramount, and we will do all we can to protect them and provide suitable advice, support, and signposting.
- 1.5 We are committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees may be experiencing domestic abuse, and that the workplace should always be safe.
- 1.6 This policy aims to deliver:
 - Our approach to supporting those who are experiencing or have previously experienced domestic abuse while ensuring residents and staff feel supported regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age, gender, disability, and any other protected characteristic.
 - Our commitment to providing safe homes and communities and a safe workplace for ourselves.
 - A service which ensures residents and colleagues understand that we take domestic abuse seriously and are committed to tackling it in partnership with our residents and local partners.
 - A tailored resident/staff-centred approach,
 - A contribution to our corporate strategy of being safe, satisfied, and sustainable.
 - Compliance with all relevant legislation.
- 1.7 This policy sets out how Housing Solutions will recognise, respond, record, and refer appropriately where we identify domestic abuse.
- 1.8 Housing Solutions will deliver this policy and its approach in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders.
- 1.9 This policy applies to all tenure types and enables us to support, resolve or enforce (as appropriate) all homes and properties we owned and/or manage.
- 1.10 The roles and responsibilities relevant to this policy are:

Board	Supports the organisation in the fair and consistent application of this policy.
Executive Team	Responsible for approving this policy and any amendments from time to time.
AD Housing & Resident Engagement	Responsible for recommending the strategic direction of the policy that feeds into the operational delivery for residents.
Housing Services Manager	Responsible for overseeing the operational delivery and service quality of housing services and compliance with this policy
Community Safety	Responsible for overseeing operational delivery of this policy and

Team Leader	ensuring best practice in the delivery of services associated with this policy to residents
Community Safety Officer	Responsible for the delivery of our domestic abuse service, case management and working with our partners
Community Safety Team	Responsible for ensuring all staff have access to the appropriate training to provide advice to residents and deal with disclosures of domestic abuse effectively.
Line Managers	Responsible for handling all disclosures sensitively, objectively
HR	Responsible for providing support to managers and employees and advising on support available to employees.
All Staff	All staff are responsible for recognising the signs of domestic abuse, reporting concerns, and helping residents to sustain their tenancies wherever possible.

2. Definitions

Domestic abuse, or domestic violence, is defined as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

Who count as ‘family members?’

Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents whether directly related, in-laws or stepfamily. However, this is not an exhaustive list and may also extend to uncles, aunts, and cousins etc.

What are the types of abuse?

‘Domestic abuse’ covers a range of types of abuse, including, but not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional abuse
- Coercive control
- Honour-based violence (HBV)

The Crown Prosecution Service describes ‘honour’-based violence as an incident or crime “which has, or may have, been committed to protect or defend the ‘honour’ of the family and or the community”. ‘Honour’ can be the motivation, excuse, or justification behind a range of violent acts.

3. Our Approach

Our residents

- 3.1 We will make initial contact with those reporting Domestic Abuse within one working day.
- 3.2 We will ensure that any resident experiencing abuse or who has experienced it will be signposted to the right support. We will do this by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- 3.3 We encourage residents to report domestic abuse, whether they are survivors of, or have witnessed, such incidents.
- 3.4 We will adopt a resident-centred approach to dealing with allegations of domestic abuse.
- 3.5 We will support our residents to empower them to make their own decisions about what they would like to happen next, so they can make informed choices.
- 3.6 We will work with our residents to agree on the steps we will take to investigate their case and how we will support them, in the shape of an action plan. We will provide our resident with a copy of this action plan if it is safe to do so. Some examples of action we can take include increasing the security at the home, advising of housing options and signposting you to other services that can help, e.g. civil orders, legal advice, or counselling.
- 3.7 We can meet residents in private at our offices or if you would prefer a different agreed safe place such as a café or community centre. We will agree how often we can stay in touch with you in a safe way.
- 3.8 With cooperation of the resident, we will carry out a risk assessment with you. This helps us to understand their situation.
- 3.9 Where we suspect or there is evidence a child or adult may be at risk, we will act promptly and in accordance with our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 3.10 We will adopt a multi-agency approach in dealing with domestic abuse. This will include working with partner agencies and specialist multi agency forums. We will co-operate with appropriate local authorities and other statutory agencies to support them in meeting their duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.
- 3.11 We will ensure that staff have access to the appropriate training so they can provide advice and deal with disclosures of domestic abuse effectively.
- 3.12 The Community Safety Team will attend mandatory training on working with, and supporting, residents experiencing domestic abuse, as well as attending any other relevant training provided by third party partners.
- 3.13 Domestic abuse is a breach of the tenancy agreement. However, the action taken against perpetrators will depend upon the individual circumstances and supporting evidence which our partner agencies provide. Wherever possible, we will take the strongest possible action against perpetrators of domestic abuse. This may include injunctions, notice of seeking possession and possession proceedings.
- 3.14 Where appropriate, we will help our partner agencies in obtaining orders which reduce domestic abuse.

- 3.15 The safety of the survivor is of paramount importance. Where it is practicable for the victim to remain in their home, every effort will be made to provide additional security and support as appropriate. This may include installation of a panic alarm in the home, or the provision of security equipment such as a safe letterbox or extra door and window security to safeguard the victim and their home, replacement of broken windows, the removal of rubbish or the carrying out of any other emergency repair to the home as a result of a domestic incident without delay (within 24 hours). There will be no recharge for damage that is repaired as a result of domestic abuse.
- 3.16 Where evidence shows that the victim would be in immediate danger if they remained in their current home, we would work with the local authority to try and source alternative temporary accommodation in the first instance.
- 3.17 Where the resident is unable to remain in their home, we will review requests to move in accordance with our allocations and transfers policy. Any move will normally be out of area to reduce risk and ensure the safety of the resident.
- 3.18 A decision to close a case should always be discussed, and ideally agreed, with the survivor before clearly explaining the reasons.

Our Staff

- 3.19 Employees who disclose experience of abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential. We will not share it with other members of staff without their permission.
- 3.20 Housing Solutions encourages all employees to report any suspicions that a colleague may be experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence in the first instance. When dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, Housing Solutions will ensure that the person with concerns knows about this policy.
- 3.21 Managers and colleagues should be alert and supportive. But they should also be respectful of the employee's privacy. Housing Solutions respects the employee's right to privacy if they do not wish to tell the organisation that they are or have experienced domestic abuse.
- 3.22 Where a colleague reports they are experiencing domestic abuse, or where we suspect a colleague is experiencing abuse, we will respond effectively, sympathetically, and confidentially.
- 3.23 Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.
- 3.24 Line managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:
- Leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
 - Consideration of temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns in line with the flexible working policy.
 - Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer-facing role.
 - Redeployment or relocation.

- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Access to counselling/support services.
- Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decisions on the course of action at every stage.

Other existing provisions (including occupational health and independent counselling services, among others) will also be signposted to staff as a means of support.

3.25 The line manager should support the colleague so that they are empowered to make their own decisions about what they would like to happen and so make informed choices.

4. Legislation

- Housing Solutions will comply with the legislation and guidance set out on page 1 of this policy. We will also keep up to date with any changes in legislation, guidance, and best practice.

5. Consumer Standards

- By publishing and adhering to this policy, Housing Solutions is upholding the requirements set out in the Consumer Standards published by the Regulator of Social Housing.

6. Equality and Diversity

- Housing Solutions recognises the needs of a diverse population and always acts within the scope of its own Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and Policy, the Human Rights Act 1998, and Equalities Act 2010 so that we treat all current and prospective tenants fairly and equally in making decisions under this policy. Housing Solutions collaborates closely with its partners to ensure it clearly understands its resident community with clear regularly updated service user profiles. Housing Solutions will record, analyse, and monitor information on ethnicity, vulnerability, and disability to support the fair application of this policy.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR), all personal and sensitive information, however received, is treated as confidential. This includes:

- Anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a resident, client, applicant, staff, or board member.
- Sensitive organisational information.

7.2 Housing Solutions employees will only involve other agencies and share information allowed either by statute or by an agreed Information Sharing Protocol relevant to this policy.

8. Review

- 8.1 We will usually review this policy every three years, or more often in response to changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, good practice, or changes in other relevant Housing Solutions' policy.

Appendix A

Other support agencies:

- **National Domestic Violence Helpline** A 24-hour helpline run in partnership between Refuge and Women's Aid Tel: 0808 2000 247 Further / specialists support:
- **Women's Aid** Provides advice and support and finds refuge spaces across the UK, and a national 24-hour helpline. www.womensaid.org.uk
- **Refuge** Finds refuge space and/or offers advice and support. Includes refuges for Black and Asian women and women with learning disabilities. www.refuge.org.uk
- **Rape Crisis Line** Some boroughs have a Rape Crisis Line. Individual contact numbers can be found on the central website: Tel: 0808 802 9999
www.rapecrisis.org.uk
- **Samaritans** Provides 24-hour confidential emotional support Tel: 08457 90 90 90
- **The Men's Advice Line**, for male domestic abuse survivors – 0808 801 0327
- **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline** – 0800 999 5428
- **GALOP** The National LGBT domestic violence helpline: 020 7704 2040
- **Asian Women's Outreach Worker** 01494 446 366
- **Victim Support** 0808 168 9111
- **Female Genital Mutilation Helpline** (operating 24/7 and staffed by specially trained child protection councillors who can offer advice, information, and assistance to members of the public and professionals): 0800 028 2550.
- **Deafhope** UK sign language service to help deaf women and children who are victims of domestic abuse 020 3947 2600.
- **National Stalking Helpline:** www.stalkinghelpline.org Tel. 0808 802 0300
- **Karma Nirvana** – Charity for victims and survivors of Honour based abuse in the UK <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/> 0800 5999 247.
- **Man Kind** - <http://mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims/> Tel: 01823 334244
- **HESTIA** - <https://www.hestia.org/domestic-abuse>
- **Child Line** - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> Tel: 0800 1111
- **Forced Marriage Unit** - <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage> Tel: 02070080151
- **Safe Spaces** - <https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/>
- **National Stalking Helpline** - <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/pages/category/national-stalking-helpline> Tel: 0808 802 0300