



SHA Domestic Abuse Policy

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1.0 POLICY INTRODUCTION, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 We are committed to providing quality, affordable and well-maintained homes, and work with our communities and partners to maintain safe, popular and inclusive neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 We recognise that domestic abuse happens within our communities and in our homes. In response to this we have signed the 'Make a Stand' pledge as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing's mission to work with housing providers to tackle domestic abuse. Our Director of Housing and Communities is our appointed Domestic Abuse Senior Champion. Appendix 1.0 outlines the key steps within this pledge.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out our approach to identifying, responding to and being proactive in addressing domestic abuse within our homes, and sensitively supporting victims. We aim to work collaboratively with victims and specialist agencies to access a range of housing options, advice, information and support.
- 1.4 Our Values represent the ethics and principles that our people value most and which reflect us as an organisation. We want to live our values and incorporate them into everything that we do, and we believe that our values are at the heart of our response to domestic abuse. Our values are as follows:
 - **Respect** - We will put people first, prioritise relationships, be kind and helpful and treat others as we would want to be treated.
 - **Integrity** - We will conduct ourselves with honesty and transparency.
 - **Positive** - We will focus on positive outcomes and be solution focused.
 - **Responsible** - We will be dependable professional, reliable and consistent
- 1.5 The scope of this Policy covers our customers and partners. Separately, we will embed the importance of recognising and supporting our staff affected by domestic abuse through our Dignity at Work Policy.
- 1.6 This policy uses the term 'victim' as a collective term encompassing individuals who identify as victims or survivors.

2.0 POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 We will work with customers, staff and partners to make our homes and communities safer by responding effectively and supportively to those affected by domestic abuse. We aim to improve overall safety and wellbeing by recognising that domestic abuse is a serious crime which has an adverse impact on the health of individuals, families and communities.
- 2.2 We aim to be proactive and responsive, and by implementing this Policy we will:

- recognise domestic abuse as a form of gender-based violence (GBV);
- aim to prevent homelessness as a result of domestic abuse and address the housing needs of those experiencing domestic abuse;
- take a victim-centred approach;
- work collaboratively with partners such as Police Scotland and the Community Relations Unit through established networks such as the Multi-agency Tasking and Co-ordination for Domestic Abuse Programme (or equivalent), and utilise the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland;
- give priority through our Allocations Policy to applicants or existing tenants experiencing domestic abuse;
- intervene effectively with tenants who perpetrate domestic abuse;
- embed a culture of early intervention. For example, many of our front line staff have intimate knowledge of our communities and are therefore in a unique position to be alert to early indications of domestic abuse within a household;
- include actions and steps to strengthen victims and their children to remain in their home where they wish to do so by transferring tenancies into their name and by making effective use of special cases so victims can make planned moves and avoid homelessness;
- be responsive by offering support such as welfare rights and money advice, alongside tenancy sustainment measures as required;
- be clear about the action we will take against perpetrators;
- Ensure an effective response to a perpetrator which does not leave the victim(s) vulnerable to further abuse and/or a perpetrator homeless;
- Raise awareness of domestic abuse and ensure everyone who is employed or involved in our organisation is aware of the importance of responding appropriately and supporting our customers. Our Senior Champion will promote this.
- Provide high quality training for our staff;
- Avoid service-generated risks including confusing domestic abuse with anti-social behaviour, offering mediation or joint interviews, not providing independent interpreting services and unsafe data protection;
- Be clear in our communication around how we will support those experiencing domestic abuse;
- encourage residents and employees to report domestic abuse;
- facilitate early identification of domestic abuse and offer supportive and effective intervention to reduce the risk of harm;
- improve the safety and welfare of adults and children affected by domestic abuse and prevent further incidents by responding rapidly, effectively and consistently to all reports.
- Create a safe and welcoming environment through our office spaces and staff approach to encourage customers to recognise us as a safe place to disclose domestic abuse and seek support.

3.0 UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. Domestic abuse is overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men. It is a significant societal issue that can affect someone regardless of age, race or ethnicity, class, disability, or whether they have children – anyone can be a victim of abuse (Scottish Women's Aid, 2025). However, certain groups may face higher risks, such as young women living in poverty or individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, and encounter unique barriers when seeking help, including women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds or older people (Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, 2023).
- 3.2 Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It often involves patterns of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, and harmful behaviour that may leave no visible injuries but can have devastating consequences, including loss of life. All forms of abuse, whether physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or financial are serious and require an appropriate response, and we have a key role to play.
- 3.3 Under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, controlling and coercive behaviour became a criminal offence when the legislation came into effect on 1 April 2019. This law recognises domestic abuse as a course of conduct offence, meaning that harmful actions are assessed collectively over time rather than in isolation. This approach reflects the lived experiences of victims and addresses behaviours previously not covered by existing offences.
- 3.4 Importantly, the legislation also introduced an aggravation where children are involved, recognising them as potential victims. This enables courts to impose harsher sentences when domestic abuse impacts children, ensuring greater protection for those most vulnerable.
- 3.5 Scotland's national strategy, *Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy to Eradicate Violence Against Women* (2018), is based on a gendered analysis of violence and highlights the importance of recognising domestic abuse as a gendered issue. While most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women, it is essential to acknowledge abuse in same-sex relationships and that men can also be victims. Evidence shows LGBTQ+ individuals are equally, if not more, likely to experience domestic abuse compared to heterosexual or cisgender individuals. However, women and girls remain the group most affected, with male violence responsible for the majority of severe harm and fatalities linked to domestic abuse. It is also important to recognise that often domestic abuse is perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner, however in some communities, wider family members may become involved in the abuse. It is essential to acknowledge this context.
- 3.6 Up to date statistical information can be accessed here: <https://womensaid.scot/information-support/domestic-abuse-statistics-scotland/> .

3.7 Domestic abuse can take many forms, including some of the examples noted below:

- *Physical Abuse* can include hitting, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, hair pulling, pushing, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation or choking;
- *Sexual Abuse* can include rape or coerced sex, forcing someone to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children;
- *Technological Abuse* can involve using social media to harass or control the victim, use of tracking apps or hidden cameras and use of home assistants (e.g. Alexa) to monitor movements;
- *Economic Abuse* can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all of their expenditure, accruing debt in the victim's name and refusing to allow the individual victim to work;
- *Psychological and emotional abuse* can include isolating them from friends, family or neighbours, threatening to kill or harm their family or pets if they were to try to leave, undermining, embarrassing or humiliating them.
- So-called *honour-based abuse* refers to acts of control, coercion, or violence committed to protect or defend perceived cultural or religious beliefs and family honour (often referred to as *izzat* in some communities). Triggers are often behaviours considered dishonourable, such as dressing or acting in a "Western" way, defying parental authority, sexual orientation, dating before marriage, or seeking separation/divorce.

3.8 Domestic abuse is not limited to partner or ex partners abuse as recognised by the Domestic Abuse Scotland Act and therefore this policy recognises that it can also occur within families and across generations, involving perpetrators such as adult siblings, children, or grandchildren. In some cases, abuse of another family member may be used as a tactic to exert control over the primary victim.

3.9 Victims of domestic abuse face significant barriers to leaving abusive relationships, including fear of retaliation, lack of resources, cultural or religious pressures, and emotional attachment to the abuser. Additional challenges exist for people from minority communities, such as language barriers, immigration status, and fear of honour-based violence, as well as for disabled individuals who may rely on their abuser for care or face inaccessible support services. These factors highlight the need for sensitive, informed responses that address diverse circumstances and ensure victims receive appropriate safeguarding and support.

4.0 LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The following legal frameworks and associated publications are relevant when developing our approach to supporting victims of domestic abuse.

- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011
- Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Protection from Harassment Act (1997)
- Family Law Scotland Act (1985 and 2006)
- Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act (2001)
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act (2007)
- Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act (2016)
- Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Act (2018)
- Housing (Scotland) Act (2014)
- Housing (Scotland) Act (2025) – *anticipated to become law in 2026*
- European Convention of Human Rights

4.2 It is recognised that there are provisions within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 that will become legal sometime within 2026, including a duty to “ask and act” about someone’s housing situation and respond to this in a way that helps them to avoid becoming homeless.

4.3 In addition, within the Act, social landlords will have new powers to protect victims of domestic abuse by securing their right to remain in their home. In cases where the victim has been living with the perpetrator but is not named on the tenancy, landlords can apply to the court for repossession on grounds of domestic abuse and transfer the tenancy solely to the victim. This ensures the perpetrator is removed from the tenancy and the victim can stay safely in the property, even if they had previously left due to abuse.

4.4 For joint tenancies, landlords will be able to seek a court order to end the perpetrator’s share of the tenancy, allowing the victim to become the sole tenant. These measures aim to prevent homelessness and provide stability for victims while holding perpetrators accountable.

4.5 Implementation of this Policy assists us to meet the standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, particularly Outcomes 1 and 6.

Outcome 1: Equalities - Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

4.6 This Policy should be cross referenced with the following Southside Housing Association policies:

- Allocations Policy
- Antisocial Behavior Policy
- Adult Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Rent Management Policy

5.0 EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

5.1 This Policy takes an equalities and human rights approach and is consistent with the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations

5.2 Domestic abuse breaches human rights under international law by denying victims of essential protections, including the right to live free from inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to respect for private and family life, covering both physical and psychological integrity, and ultimately, the right to life.

5.3 Domestic abuse and associated forms of violence such as rape and sexual violence deny these basic rights in themselves. These rights are further denied if support services fail to respond to such abuse; if laws do not protect victims from it; and if policies do not prevent it. As well as being a human rights issue, domestic abuse is a housing issue - it is a leading cause of homelessness particularly in women and children and is linked with youth homelessness. We have a duty of care to those experiencing domestic abuse, and to protect tenants' and children's rights to a peaceful and safe home.

5.4 In applying a human rights approach to domestic abuse means that we listen to the experiences of victims and support their right to remain in their home or support them to find an alternative home if that is what they choose. As housing professionals, we have privileged access to tenants and their homes and can make a significant difference in the context of the community response to domestic abuse. Responding effectively to domestic abuse is directly linked to a number of our priorities such as preventing homelessness, child protection, tenant safety, poverty and inequalities. If victims of domestic abuse so not have secure homes and feel safe, these priorities will not be met.

5.5 We will take a victim-centred approach to domestic abuse. This approach extends to seeking to provide alternative accommodation for perpetrators, and collaborating with city-wide services, Police Scotland and other specialist agencies.

- 5.6 Taking an equalities approach does not mean treating everyone the same - it is about recognising difference and addressing disadvantage. We will acknowledge gender in the context of domestic abuse. While some men do experience domestic abuse, this is predominantly perpetrated by other men. Research consistently shows that where men are involved in domestic abuse, it is as perpetrators rather than as victims. When women are perpetrators, this is most likely because they are responding in self-defence or to protect their children. Within the scope of our role, we will hold perpetrators to account for domestic abuse where this applies, and understand how gender influences abusive behaviour, whether it occurs by men on women or on other men; and by women on men and on other women. GBV, including domestic abuse, is a means of controlling others and an abuse of power. The gender analysis includes abuse perpetrated by women against men and abuse in same-sex relationships, and these also require a 'gender-informed' response.
- 5.7 We will also aim to eliminate any discrimination, either directly or indirectly, against any individual on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, or marriage and civil partnership.
- 5.8 As a key and visible organisation within the communities that we serve we want to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in everything that we do. This includes in our service delivery and in our response to domestic abuse. We are striving to promote and protect the human right to a home and to protection from abuse.
- 5.9 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been carried out on this Policy to ensure that there are no negative impacts of the Policy.

6.0 Domestic Abuse and Antisocial Behaviour

- 6.1 We have a distinct Antisocial Behaviour Policy that should be considered alongside this Policy.
- 6.2 It is crucial that staff dealing with reports of antisocial behaviour consider the potential for these reports to be signs of domestic abuse and whether a more sensitive response is required. We will take a holistic approach and where antisocial behaviour is reported we will also consider other factors such as the scope of repairs related to the property and the rent account. It can often be difficult to be sure that domestic abuse is happening due to one factor, however the pattern of behaviours and incidents may give a clearer indication.
- 6.3 By purely considering domestic abuse as antisocial behaviour we risk compromising an effective response, remembering that domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive control in an intimate relationship. It could risk blaming the victim; inadvertently colluding with the perpetrator; and preventing the victim from receiving support.

- 6.4 Our staff will be alert to perpetrator tactics such as isolating victims from their neighbours, threatening that victims will lose their home or be unable to pay their rent as ways to prevent them from leaving and enabling further control. We may become aware of domestic abuse because of noise complaints, police callouts, broken locks and/or damage to property. We will respond in a way that ensures the victim is not put at further risk or blamed for the perpetrator's behaviour. We will not try to resolve tenancy issues or complaints relating to domestic abuse through mediation in the way that we may do for other antisocial behaviour incidents. This is because domestic abuse is a crime of control and the power imbalance between victims and perpetrators carries risks which makes mediation dangerous rather than helpful.

7.0 Our Role

- 7.1 Our role as a housing association in responding to domestic abuse, will be around identification of the signs of abuse, being an approachable safe place for disclosure, followed by support to the customer in a way that responds to their needs and prioritises their safety.
- 7.2 We recognise that every reported or disclosed case of domestic abuse will be different. Our response will therefore be sensitive to the individual circumstances and needs of the victim. When a tenant or household member reports domestic abuse all available options will be discussed and considered with them, including:
- making arrangements for their immediate personal safety;
 - reviewing and where possible improving the safety and security of their existing home, to enable them to remain there safely;
 - discussing whether they wish to move to another property or neighbourhood;
 - reporting incidents to the Police, which may result in criminal action against the perpetrator;
 - where appropriate, taking legal action against the perpetrator.

7.3 Prevention

We will:

- work collaboratively with other organisations to prevent domestic abuse;
- raise awareness of domestic abuse, our policy and support services, whilst challenging attitudes where required. This will include staff training, information on our internal communications hub and space on our website.
- be clear in our statements about actions we will take against perpetrators;
- maximise an 'eyes and ears' approach, whereby all of our front line staff will be alert to and report concerns they have around domestic abuse;
- record any concerns we have around domestic abuse on our housing management system and take a holistic approach to checking any reports of antisocial behaviour, repair patterns and rent accounts issues;

- We will record any restraining orders, protection order/injunction the victim may have in place on our housing management system and report to the Police any breaches staff witness.

7.4 *Housing Options*

We will:

- prioritise those experiencing domestic abuse through our Allocations Policy, taking a sensitive and supportive approach;
- support victims to remain in their home when they choose to do so;
- link with the local authority homeless casework team and other housing associations to assist victims requiring alternative accommodation as required;
- where required, utilise our 'special lets' option within our Allocations Policy to rehouse the victim to avoid homelessness;
- where the perpetrator is our tenant and where appropriate, we will seek to rehouse them with urgency through the 'special lets' option within our Allocations Policy;
- support the victim to transfer the tenancy to their name;
- provide signposting to victims to gain further support and legal advice;
- refer victims and perpetrators to our welfare rights team and provide tenancy sustainment support as required;
- give consideration and support to acknowledge and respond appropriately where rent arrears have been accumulated within domestic abuse circumstances.
- Explore partnerships with other agencies to offer an agreed number of properties as supported accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse.

7.5 *Action Against Perpetrators*

We will:

- take legal action to transfer a tenancy to the victim;
- take legal action for recovery of possession of the property against a perpetrator, where other members of the household have left the home because of domestic abuse;
- take action to rehouse a perpetrator where they are our tenant and where this is required/appropriate;
- support the police in their activities to deal with perpetrators;
- ensure any rechargeable repairs attributed to domestic abuse are charged to the perpetrator and not the victim.

7.6 *Confidentiality*

We will:

- value the importance of confidentiality to victims of domestic abuse and be aware of the potential risks around this;
- have in place a data processing agreement with the local authority Community Relations Unit and Police Scotland, setting out the importance of confidentiality, restrictions and what and why information will be shared;
- be sensitive to the physical environment and where victims are comfortable disclosing information (e.g. quiet room, telephone etc. and how public/open reception areas may not be appropriate);
- be sensitive and responsive to the need for victims, particularly women who request to meet with and discuss their circumstances with a female member of staff.

7.7 *Support*

We will:

- recognise that separation of the victim and perpetrator is a time of increased risk and we will therefore closely monitor any reported repairs during this time and increase our welfare checks for the victim;
- strengthen our partnerships with specialist support providers such as Glasgow Women's Aid, Say Women and Amina, who offer specialist support to Muslim and BME women and men in Scotland, which may be particularly relevant for our communities;
- develop processes to ensure our staff are clear and confident in how to respond to a customer who is disclosing domestic abuse or where we suspect abuse;
- put in place clear systems for referring victims to relevant agencies. This will go beyond signposting and where required will support the victim's engagement with the receiving agency;
- be clear in our communication on our website, in our newsletters and on our social media regarding support for those experiencing domestic abuse.

7.8 *Training*

We will:

- provide training for front line/key staff around domestic abuse;
- apply the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's Domestic Abuse, Reflective Toolkit.

8.0 **POLICY REVIEW**

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner in the event of any significant legislative or regulatory changes. In this instance, it is anticipated that the Policy should be updated to reflect the changes within the forthcoming Housing (Scotland) Act.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 This Policy was created with support from:

- Believe Housing's Domestic Abuse Policy;
- Wheatly Domestic Abuse Policy;
- Scottish Federation of Housing Association's – Domestic Abuse – Reflective toolkit (Dr. Kelly Henderson, Addressing Domestic Abuse);
- Domestic Abuse – A Good Practice Guide for Social Landlords.

Appendix 1.0

The infographic is titled 'The pledge' and is set against a dark purple background. It contains four numbered steps, each in a white-bordered box with a light purple diagonal background. The numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are in large, bold, pink font. The text for each step is in white.

The pledge

By signing up to the **Make a Stand** pledge you are committing to make sure your organisation does the following:

- 1** Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
- 2** Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
- 3** Put in place a HR policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
- 4** Appoint a champion at a senior level in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse



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