



**City of London Corporation**  
**Department of Community & Children's Services**  
**Housing Service**

**DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

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Approved by:	<i>Housing Management &amp; Almshouses Sub-Committee</i>
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## **1. Introduction**

This policy sets out how we will respond to cases of domestic abuse affecting our residents.

We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will treat all reports with the utmost sensitivity. We will take a victim-centred approach to cases, with the aim of reducing risks posed to the victim and any affected household members.

We will work closely with partner agencies to respond effectively to cases of domestic abuse and provide the best possible outcomes for victims.

## **2. Aims and Scope**

This policy applies to domestic abuse experienced or perpetrated by our residents and their household members. It covers residents of all tenures living in properties owned or managed by the City's Housing & Neighbourhoods Service, as well as their household members.

This policy aims to:

- Emphasise our commitment to supporting victims and their families
- Enable staff to support and advise victims with confidence
- Outline how we will respond to cases of domestic abuse
- Demonstrate our commitment to working with partner agencies to assist victims

## **3. Our Commitment to Victims**

We are committed to providing an effective response to domestic abuse by:

- Taking all disclosures of domestic abuse seriously
- Putting victims in contact with specialist agencies which can offer them advice and support
- Taking or supporting action against perpetrators when appropriate
- Addressing the victim's housing needs

## **4. Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is defined as:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, regardless of their background. Domestic abuse does not only occur in intimate partner relationships; it includes violence between family members or people living in the household.

The abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Physical violence
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Coercive or controlling behaviour
- 'Honour'-based violence and abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Stalking behaviour

**Controlling behaviour** is 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.

**Coercive behaviour** is 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.

**Stalking** is a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive and causes fear of violence or serious harassment, alarm or distress. It can include following a person, repeatedly contacting them against their wishes, loitering near them in public, impersonating that person to others, watching or spying on them, or interfering with their property. This is not confined to intimate partner or domestic relationships but is often a feature of domestic abuse.

**Financial abuse** is when someone controls a person's ability to acquire, use and manage their own money or resources. It may include taking someone's money, building up debts in their name, stopping them from working or taking control of bank accounts.

**Emotional (or psychological) abuse** is an attack on someone's personality and dignity as a person. It can include name-calling, insulting, threatening or intimidating someone, or blaming them for the abuse they are suffering. It can result in a loss of self-worth and increased reliance on the abuser.

## **5. Supporting Victims**

We are committed to supporting victims of Domestic abuse by:

- Taking a non-judgmental, victim-centred approach
- Ensuring our staff are trained appropriately to help victims
- Working with partner agencies to assist victims who seek our help
- Safeguarding the victim's security of tenure whenever possible
- Taking legal action against perpetrators where we have the power to do so

We recognise that victims of domestic abuse may be isolated, frightened and ashamed and may need extensive support. They may be very reluctant to seek help or support any action against the perpetrator.

We will deal with disclosures of domestic abuse sensitively and in confidence. When other safeguarding concerns are involved, for instance involving children, these will be dealt with in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

## **6. Working with Other Agencies**

Managing cases of domestic abuse requires a multi-agency approach. With their consent, we will put victims in contact with specialist support agencies which can provide advice and assistance.

We will work with statutory agencies and key partners to manage risks posed to the victim and their household. Higher-risk cases will be referred to the local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

## **7. Service Standards**

If someone reports domestic violence in person, they will be seen the same day by a member of staff if they wish. If they make a disclosure by other means, they will be offered a meeting within one working day, or later if that suits them. If they do not want to meet with one of our staff, we will discuss the possibility of making a referral to a specialist agency instead.

We will ensure that:

- The victim can meet with a staff member of the same sex if they wish
- The meeting is held in a safe place at a time that suits the victim
- The discussion can take place without children being present
- The victim can have a friend, relative or advocate at the meeting
- Any access needs, for example interpreting, are accommodated at our expense

We will use approved risk assessment tools to assess the risk involved in the case and will normally seek advice from specialist agencies who may be able to assist the victim.

We will make referrals to other agencies as appropriate, including:

- Police
- Domestic abuse support agencies and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs)
- Victim Support
- National domestic violence helplines
- Legal advice (normally via a support agency)

We will assist victims in accessing help from these agencies, if requested.

## **8. Accommodation and Housing Transfers**

We recognise that concerns about accommodation and tenancy security are key issues for victims. We are committed to helping victims to maintain their security of tenure and ensuring that they are not deprived of settled accommodation due to having to flee violence or abuse.

When the victim is a tenant, we will work with them (and any agencies involved) to help manage the risks posed to them in remaining at home if they wish to remain in their current accommodation.

If a tenant wishes to transfer, we will deal with their case in accordance with our Allocations Scheme (see section 11 below).

## **9. Security at Home**

The City of London operates a 'Sanctuary' home security scheme, which is administered by the Department of Community & Children's Services' Homelessness Team and the City Police. The scheme aims to reduce repeat victimisation and homelessness by improving home security. Residents living in the City of London can be referred to this scheme by estate staff and other agencies. The scheme applies to both tenants and leaseholders.

In other boroughs, similar schemes operate, and we will refer residents for assistance directly where possible, or through another agency such as the Police.

We may also assist residents by making improvements to their home security ourselves outside the sanctuary scheme, such as changing or adding locks, installing door viewers and other minor works.

## **10. Emergency Accommodation for City of London Tenants/Lessees**

When a City of London tenant or lessee requires emergency accommodation due to fleeing domestic abuse, they will be referred to the relevant local authority's homelessness service, or a support agency that may provide access to a refuge. The Housing Service is unable to provide emergency accommodation to victims directly as we do not manage any temporary accommodation ourselves.

If the tenant or lessee lives in the City of London, we will liaise directly with colleagues in the Homelessness Team to discuss options for securing emergency accommodation. In cases where the resident lives in another local authority area, we will assist them as appropriate in securing assistance from the local authority in question.

## **11. Permanent Housing Transfers**

When a tenant seeks a transfer to alternative accommodation due to domestic abuse, their application will be dealt with in accordance with our current Allocations Scheme. Urgent re-housing for tenants who are victims of domestic abuse will normally be achieved by Management Transfer. Please refer to the Allocations Scheme for more details on how these applications will be processed.

In assessing housing need, we will generally seek the assistance of outside agencies to determine the risk involved in the case and how it can be managed. The risk assessment will then be used to inform the course of action taken in terms of re-housing and the suitability of any offer to be made.

## **12. Joint Tenancies**

Where the victim and perpetrator are joint tenants, we are not able to decide who should occupy the property. In these circumstances, the victim may apply to court for an occupation order, or an order transferring the tenancy to their sole name.

We will discuss making a referral for independent legal advice in these circumstances. This may be sought from a domestic violence support agency, a housing advice organisation such as Shelter, a law centre or the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

In accordance with our Tenancy Policy, we may be able to consider granting a sole tenancy to the victim depending on the circumstances. Please refer to the Tenancy Policy for more information.

## **13. Action Against Perpetrators**

Where the perpetrator is a tenant or household member, we may take legal action in accordance with the tenancy, or other powers such as those contained in anti-social behaviour legislation. For instance, we may:

- Seek possession of a property when the victim has left due to domestic violence, leaving the perpetrator in occupation
- Apply for an injunction to prevent a violent person from attending a property or estate

Any action we take will be pursued in accordance with the victim's wishes as far as possible. The main consideration for us is not to do anything that increases the risk posed to the victim.

We can also assist victims to access independent legal advice relating to:

- Occupation orders
- Non-molestation orders and injunctions
- Restraining orders

## **14. Confidentiality**

We will respect the privacy of victims and will deal with reports of domestic abuse in strict confidence.

In certain situations, we are required by law to disclose information relating to individual cases to other agencies. For example, we will have to report cases of domestic abuse to social services when there are children or vulnerable adults in the household. Whenever possible, we will discuss this duty with the person disclosing the information to us before passing the information on to another agency.

## **15. Monitoring and Performance**

We will monitor our use of this policy and the way in which it is implemented, ensuring that any relevant information is reported at appropriate intervals.

## **16. Training**

We will provide all staff responsible for implementing this policy with comprehensive training as required. We will also provide suitable domestic abuse awareness training for staff of all grades, with more specialist training for managers and those working directly with victims.

## **17. Equality and Diversity**

This Policy has been subject to a full Equalities Analysis and will be implemented in accordance with our responsibilities and duties under relevant legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

## **18. Accessibility**

We will ensure that tenants' needs are considered when implementing this Policy to ensure that they are treated fairly. We will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretation or transcription as appropriate.

## **19. Data Protection and Information Exchange**

We will comply with our obligations under relevant data protection legislation and regulations. We will process and store personal information securely. We may share information with other agencies in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and other relevant legislation.

There are some circumstances in which we are required by law to disclose information given to us. Where possible, we will discuss this with the person disclosing the information to us, though this may not always be possible.

## **20. Policy Review**

We will review this policy at least every three years, or following relevant changes to legislation, regulation or policy.

## **21. Legislation**

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Crime and Security Act 2010

Data Protection Act 2018

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012

Equalities Act 2010

Family Law Act 1996

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

Housing Act 1985

Housing Act 1996

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Serious Crime Act 2015

## **22. Related documents**


Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

City of London Housing Allocations Scheme

Safeguarding Policy (DCCS)

Tenancy Policy



<b>Department of Community &amp; Children’s Services</b>		
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