



Govanhill
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Domestic Abuse Policy

Approved: 24th August 2023

Review Date: 1st September 2028

If you have difficulty with sight, or if you require a translated copy of this policy, we would be pleased to provide the information in a form that suits your needs.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Govanhill Housing Association (GhHA) views domestic abuse, and how we will respond to and seek to deal with any reports of such abuse affecting tenants or members of their households. The term 'abuse' covers violence as well as verbal or other forms of abuse.
- 1.2 GhHA believes that domestic abuse presents one of the highest risks to personal safety and is unacceptable. GhHA will therefore take the strongest action possible against perpetrators of domestic abuse where it has the power to do so and with the consent of the victim.
- 1.3 GhHA will deal with all reports of domestic abuse as an emergency and respond to them within 24 hours. Applying a 'survivor centred' approach we will assist the victim to reach a decision which they feel best secures their safety by:
 - reviewing their accommodation,
 - enabling the level of assistance they want, and
 - taking action against the perpetrator which the victim and we feel is most appropriate.

2.0 DEFINITION

- 2.1 Domestic abuse is controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour perpetrated by a partner or an ex-partner. It can begin at any stage during the relationship or after a relationship has ended.
- 2.2 GhHA adopts the Scottish Government definition of domestic abuse, which is:

"Domestic Abuse, as gendered based violence, can be perpetrated by partners or ex partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, with-holding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends). It can be characterised by a pattern of coercive control often escalating in frequency and severity over time."

Source: National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland, Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse, Edinburgh, November 2000

- 2.3 Coercive 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.

2.4 Coercive Controlling Behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim.

2.5 Domestic abuse can manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members via unlawful activities, such as forced marriage, 'honour based abuse' and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of abuse. Any such actions are not acceptable, whatever form they take.

3.0 OUR AIM OF THIS POLICY

3.1 By adopting this policy, our aims are 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;
- increase awareness and understanding of this issue amongst residents and employees;
- encourage residents 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;
- empower victims by providing information on the options available to them;
- improve the response to victims through effective engagement of appropriate external enforcement and support agencies;
- create a consistent approach for recording and monitoring incidents of domestic abuse;
- inform colleagues of best practice when responding to domestic abuse;
- ensure that all sections are clear regarding their roles in tackling and responding to issues around domestic abuse.

4.0 OUR APPROACH

4.1 GhHA believes that its tenants and other householders should not live in fear of violence or abuse. GhHA takes domestic abuse very seriously and is committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching the organisation for assistance in cases of domestic abuse.

5.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

5.1 We will ensure that any action taken under this policy complies with our Equality & Diversity policy.

6.0 PREVENTION

6.1 As part of our arrangements to prevent domestic abuse we will:

- make all new tenants aware of GhHA policies relating to rehousing, relationship breakdown and where applicable the implications of joint tenancies;
- publicise this domestic abuse policy to all tenants and employees, highlighting the consequences for perpetrators;
- provide advice and information within GhHA office.

7.0 SURVIVOR CENTRED APPROACH

7.1 We will adopt a 'survivor-centred' approach in dealing with domestic abuse, i.e. if a person feels they are experiencing domestic abuse we will deal with it under this policy.

7.2 We will deal with all reports in a non-judgemental manner and in confidence.

7.3 We will not require victims to take legal action or to contact the Police before we provide assistance.

7.4 We will only act with the victim's consent. The exception to this general rule is where we consider a child is at risk in any situation or if there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone involved. Where a person is identified as the victim of domestic abuse, any interaction with them will be guided by best practice guidelines.

7.5 Where a resident reporting domestic abuse needs emergency accommodation GhHA will provide advice and assistance on accessing such accommodation provided by Glasgow City Council or by a women's refuge. We will provide a referral letter where appropriate and advocate on our tenant's behalf.

7.6 GhHA recognises that every reported case of domestic abuse will be different. Our response will therefore be tailored 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 accommodation, to enable them to remain there safely;
- reporting incidents to the Police, which may result in criminal action against the perpetrator;
- where appropriate, legal action against the perpetrator
- if there is a significant risk, a referral being made to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)
- offering support services

7.7 The safety of the victim and their dependents will be our priority. An Action Plan setting out further action will be agreed with the victim, and we will regularly contact the victim and keep them updated with progress.

7.8 We will take a proactive and sympathetic approach. Each case will have its own challenges and so the type and level of assistance offered will be finalised by the Senior Housing Officer or the Tenancy Services Manager.

7.9 GhHA will advise victims who wish to remain in their own homes of any local 'sanctuary' schemes (i.e. funds available to improve the security of their existing accommodation). We will allocate discretionary funds for victims, to assist them in rebuilding their lives and homes. We will also consider funding such improvements where there are no local authority sanctuary schemes in place.

7.10 GhHA will offer assistance to those experiencing domestic abuse by not recharging them for lock changes and damages due to the domestic abuse. Where appropriate we will charge such costs to the perpetrator.

7.11 Where the police wish to install additional security, permission will be given immediately subject to agreement on who will maintain such items.

7.12 In cases where the property has been damaged by a perpetrator of domestic abuse, repairs will be carried out by the organisation in line with the relevant policy. Although a crime reference number is usually required, in exceptional circumstances, the Senior Housing Officer or Tenancy Services Manager has the authority to waive this condition.

7.13 Any damage will be photographed and noted and a recharge may be raised against the perpetrator. Where appropriate, GhHA may seek to take direct action against the perpetrator and report the damage to the police as a crime.

7.14 If the tenant experiencing domestic abuse is named on the tenancy agreement, they may be able to transfer the tenancy agreement solely into their name. This will depend on:

- the legal status of the relationship
- whose name is on the tenancy agreement

7.15 If the tenant is married or has a registered civil partnership, the partner will have a right to live with the tenant within the family home, even if their name is not on the tenancy agreement. They will need to apply to the court for an exclusion order to suspend their rights to live in the home. The court will grant an exclusion order when it can be shown that it is necessary for a tenants own protection or the protection of their children.

7.16 As part of a tenancy agreement Tenants, those living with a tenant and any visitors to a property, must not harass or assault any person in the house or neighbourhood for any reason.

7.17 Where a resident reporting domestic abuse requests permanent rehousing, we will prioritise their application as a 'management transfer'. In such cases the suspension process will not be applicable and we will review and determine the action to be taken on a case by case basis. There will normally be a limit on the number of occasions we will offer this, typically it will only be offered once.

8.0 ACTION AGAINST PERPETRATORS

8.1 GhHA will work with the Police and other external agencies in dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse. Action against perpetrators will depend upon individual circumstances. This may include legal action for recovery of possession against a perpetrator, where other members of the household have left the home due to domestic abuse.

8.2 Subject to data protection requirements, we will share information with other relevant agencies so that serial perpetrators are identified and dealt with appropriately.

9.0 CONFIDENTIALITY/GPDR

9.1 GhHA recognises that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for tenants to report and will ensure total confidentiality on any cases that are reported. Information will be shared within the Association on a strictly 'need to know' basis. We will adhere to all current data protection requirements and internal relevant policies.

9.2 We may however share relevant information with local agencies such as Police Scotland or Social Work Services. This will mean that cases are dealt with more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the tenant and/or their dependants to provide better or more effective support.

9.3 Victims will be encouraged to allow GhHA to share information with other agencies, including the Police and local authority departments, to ensure that the full range of civil and criminal action can be pursued and

appropriate assistance provided. However, all information provided by the victim will be treated with the utmost confidence and only passed to external agencies with their proper informed consent, unless the risk is such that it must be shared in order to protect the victim.

9.4 The exceptions to this will be:

- where we consider a child is at risk in any situation, or
- if there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone involved, or
- if we are obliged by law to disclose information.

9.5 The Senior Housing Officer or Tenancy Services Manager must approve any disclosure that does not have the victim's consent.

10.0 REVIEW

10.1 The Head of Tenancy Services will ensure that this policy is reviewed every five years.