



Govanhill
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Domestic Abuse Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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, applicants, partners or ex partners. The term 'abuse' covers violence as well as verbal or other forms of abuse.

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/survivor.

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-survivor to reach a decision which they feel best secures their safety by:

- reviewing their accommodation,
- agreeing and providing the level of support they wish to receive, and
- taking action against the perpetrator which the victim/survivor and we feel is most appropriate.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All tenants, applicants, partners and expartners
- All incidents of domestic abuse occurring within, or impacting upon, our tenancies
- All staff, who have a responsibility to act in accordance with this policy
- Support will be provided regardless of gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, immigration status or family structure.

3.0 DEFINITION

Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour used by one person to control, dominate or intimidate another person with whom they have, or have had, an intimate or family relationship. Abuse may involve a single incident or a course of conduct that escalates in frequency and severity over time.

Domestic abuse is recognised by the Scottish Government as a gendered crime, reflecting that the majority of abuse is perpetrated by men against women. However, GhHA recognises that anyone can experience domestic abuse, including men and individuals within LGBTQ+ communities, GhHA is committed to supporting all survivors of domestic abuse.

Scottish Government full definition -

"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

4.0 UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse may include, but is not limited to physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, financial, coercive control and technological abuse. It can begin at any stage during a relationship or after a relationship has ended.

Domestic abuse 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, are perpetrated against the will of the individual, including rape) mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, with-holding money and other types of controlling and coercive 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.

Domestic abuse can also 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.

Victim/-Survivors of domestic abuse face significant barriers to leaving abusive relationships, including fear of retaliation, lack of resources, financial concerns, 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 victim-suvivors receive appropriate safeguarding and support.

The different types of abuse a person may encounter can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

1. **Emotional Abuse** - includes non-physical behaviours that are meant to control, isolate, or frighten the victim-suvivor. This may present in romantic relationships as threats, insults, constant monitoring, excessive jealousy, manipulation, humiliation, intimidation, and dismissiveness, among others.

2. **Physical Abuse** - this could include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, murder.
3. **Sexual Abuse** - this could include rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim-survivor to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children and the use of digital imagery.
4. **Financial Abuse** - this could include controlling money and bank accounts, making a person account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a person's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow them to study or work and depriving them of essentials.
5. **Psychological Abuse** - includes behaviour that aims to cause emotional or mental harm and may encompass a wider range of behaviours such as manipulation, control, gas lighting or intimidation.
6. **Controlling Behaviour** - this includes a range of behaviour which makes a person reliant and/or dependent on another person by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacity for personal gain, depriving them of the means need for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
7. **Coercive Behaviour** – this includes 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-survivor. This includes forced marriage and so-called 'honour violence.'
8. **Stalking** - Stalking or harassment happens when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, threatened or distressed. Stalking is a form of harassment where the stalker carries out behaviors' which are fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated. The types of behaviors' which, constitute stalking are not prescribed instead the legislation contains examples of how stalking can take place: Following you. Contacting you or trying to contact you. Publishing material about you or pretending to be you online or elsewhere. Monitoring your internet use, emails or other electronic communications. Loitering near places you go (whether public or private spaces). Interfering with your property. Watching or spying on you.

5.0 POLICY AIMS

The aim of this policy is to make sure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse feels safe, listened to and supported, and knows how we can help.

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Improve safety and wellbeing by recognising domestic abuse as a serious crime that can harm individuals, families, children and communities
- Raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse among tenants, household members and staff
- Encourage people to report domestic abuse, by making it clear that reports will be taken seriously and handled sensitively

- Protect adults and children affected by domestic abuse by responding to all reports quickly, consistently and with care
- Support and empower victim-survivors, by giving clear information about their options and respecting their choices
- Work closely with specialist support services, the local authority and the Police, where appropriate, to improve the support available
- Respond in a consistent way, including recording and monitoring reports carefully and confidentially
- Ensure staff follow good practice and understand how to respond safely and appropriately to domestic abuse
- Take appropriate action against those causing harm, rather than against the person experiencing abuse
- Support victim-survivors to remain in their home, when this is what they want,
- Support victim-survivors move home, if they feel this is what they want
- Take legal action to recover tenancies from the perpetrator and allocate the recovered property to the victim-survivor.
- Avoid unsafe practices, such as treating domestic abuse as antisocial behaviour, offering mediation, using joint interviews, failing to provide independent interpretation, or mishandling personal information
- Create a safe, welcoming environment, through our offices and staff so people feel able to ask for help and disclose abuse
- Ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in responding to and supporting people affected by domestic abuse

6.0 OUR APPROACH

We follow a victim-survivor centred approach. This means that if a person tells us they are experiencing domestic abuse, we will treat this as domestic abuse under this policy. We will listen without judgement, take all reports seriously, and handle information sensitively and confidentially.

GhHA will deal with all reports of domestic abuse as an emergency and respond to them within 24 hours

We recognise that every situation is different. Our response will be flexible and guided by the wishes and circumstances of the person affected. People experiencing domestic abuse do not have to contact the Police or take legal action to receive support from us.

The safety of the victim-survivor and any dependants is our priority.

Where a report is made, we will agree a “plan” with the individual, setting out the support and actions required, and keep in regular contact to review progress.

When domestic abuse is reported or suspected, action we will take may include:

- Immediate safety planning and welfare checks
- Move to temporary accommodation for internal tenants if this is immediately necessary

- Where appropriate, carry out a risk assessment by using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based violence Safe Lives Risk Identification Checklist (DASH) the checklist can be found at www.safelives.org.uk safely planning to provide support for the tenant and their children where present.
- Referrals to specialist domestic abuse services, where appropriate, we will provide referral letters and advocate on the tenant's behalf.
- Referral to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) where risk thresholds are met. We will use the MARAC safe lives checklist which is a consistent simple tool to help identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose case should be referred to MARAC
- Support to report incidents to Police Scotland, where the victim-survivor chooses
- Link in with appropriate external agencies
- Raising legal action to transfer the tenancy to the victim-survivor, or where the victim-survivor has moved out due to safety issues, we may raise action to recover the tenancy thereafter entering into a tenancy with the victim-survivor for the same property.
- Prioritise a housing transfer where the victim-survivor is a GhHA tenant
- Allocate domestic abuse points to the Housing Application Form

We recognise that risk can increase during and after separation. Where appropriate, we will increase contact, welfare checks and monitoring.

Staff will be trained, supported and confident in responding to reports and concerns.

We will support victim-survivors to remain in their home where this is safe and what they want.

All information will be treated as highly confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis. Information may be shared without consent only where required to protect children or vulnerable people, to prevent serious harm, or where legally necessary.

7.0 PREVENTION

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 accessible advice and information within GhHA office
- use our social media platform to raise awareness

8.0 LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

There are various pieces of legislation which inform this policy a list of these can be found in Appendix 1.

The main policy documents includes:

- The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill 2021, which, came into force in 2023
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025

9.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We will ensure that any action taken under this policy complies with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

10.0 CONFIDENTIALITY/GPDR

GhHA recognises that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive matters for tenants and applicants we will ensure complete confidentiality in all 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.

All information provided will be treated with the utmost confidence and only passed to external agencies with the victim-survivors proper informed consent, unless the risk is such that it must be shared in order to protect the victim-survivor.

The exceptions to this will be:

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

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

11.0 REVIEW

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

Appendix 1

The following legislation was referenced when developing our approach to supporting victim -survivors 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)
European Convention of Human Rights

