

The Wrekin Housing Group

POLICY No. /19
DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Policy Statement

1. The Wrekin Housing Group (Group) believes that residents of its homes should not live in fear of abuse or violence from a current or former partner or any other member of the household and we will look to assist and support any person suffering or threatened with abuse or violence.

2. Definition

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

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 sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional forms of abuse.

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 a person.

2. Policy Approach

- The Group will take a sensitive, victim centred approach in responding to cases of domestic abuse, recognising that evidence of abuse may not be readily available.
- The Group works with Domestic Abuse partnerships and is a key partner in the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process, where agencies determine a range of actions to support the victim and tackle the perpetrator. The Group will consider implementation of MARAC recommendations, where necessary following a discussion with the victim/other affected parties.
- The Group provides secure accommodation and will consider additional security measures to meet the circumstances of each situation.
- Where necessary the Group will provide advice to victims on alternative accommodation and sources of support, including assistance from voluntary as well as statutory agencies.
- Where the Group becomes aware of objective evidence of domestic abuse impacting children a referral will be made to the appropriate Safeguarding agency in accordance with agreed Safeguarding procedures in order to minimise the risk to the individuals involved.
- Where employees of the Group become aware of evidence of elder abuse towards its residents, a referral will be made to the appropriate Safeguarding agency. In 1993 Action on Elder Abuse established the following definition of elder abuse: 'A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person'.
- Where a joint tenancy exists we will be flexible in dealing with the circumstances to find a suitable and sustainable resolution.
- All frontline Group employees will receive appropriate training on the Domestic Abuse policy and procedure.
- The Group website will provide up to date information and guidance regarding Domestic Abuse.

- The Group has a policy for offering support to employees suffering Domestic Abuse (see HR policy).
- As part of our commitment to the 'Make a Stand' pledge of which we are a signatory, the Group has a Domestic Abuse Champion who is there to proactively ensure that the Group meets its commitment.

Equalities Impact Assessment	The Policy sets out how the Group will deal with reports of Domestic Abuse. It states clearly that the aim is to support victims of the abuse and to resolve the issues in the most appropriate way. This will often involve the expertise of external agencies and organisations. The Group will comply with all relevant legislation that seeks to ensure that no individual or groups of people are disadvantaged by the adoption of this Policy.
Risk Assessment	The Group has a legal requirement to produce and publish a statement of policy and procedures on Anti-social behaviour and this also relates to the policy and procedure regarding Domestic Abuse. Failure to do so could result in regulatory action. Failure to implement the Policy would result in inconsistent service to tenants.
Legal Assessment	The policy complies with current legislation.
Consultation	Tenants Panel Community Safety Partnership Practitioners and other internal employees. Telford & Wrekin Council / Drug and Alcohol Action Team.
	<p><u>Supporting Policies</u></p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Policy works alongside a number of other policies, corporate strategies and statutory obligations. The key ones are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity • Income Management • Services to Vulnerable People Policy • Tenant Involvement • Lettings Policy • Health and Safety • Tenancy Management Intervention Procedures • ASB, Hate Crime & Harassment Policy • Safeguarding Policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Slavery • HR Policy
Policy Category	Housing Management
Monitoring	Monitoring by local Teams and by reports as required via management.
Board approval	11 th July 2019
Implementation date	1 August 2019
Review Date	August 2022

Domestic Abuse Procedure Statement

The Wrekin Housing Group (Group) condemns all forms of Domestic Abuse and will seek to provide high quality advice, support and practical assistance to customers who are victim of Domestic Abuse.

How to report incidents of Domestic Abuse and how to receive appropriate support

In all serious cases it must be reported to the Police on 999 when it is occurring.

The Group can be contacted via the general number 01952 217100 where the call will be forwarded to the appropriate officer who will take the appropriate action and/or give suitable advice.

Nationally there are agencies to support victims of domestic abuse:

Domestic Violence helpline: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour) – Women’s Aid and Refuge (This service is for both men and women)

Locally there are also many support agencies and these will vary dependent upon the location of the address. The relevant area numbers are listed on the Local Authorities websites:

In the Borough of Telford & Wrekin, reports can be made to the Local Authority by phoning **01952 385385** or Police on 999 for emergencies.

In the Shropshire Area, calls should be made to Women’s aid on **0800 783 1359** or in emergency contact the police on 999.

In the Staffordshire Area, reports should be made to Staffordshire Women’s Aid on **0300 330 5959** or Men’s Advice line on **0808 801 0327**. For emergencies contact the police on 999.

In the Herefordshire Area, reports of Domestic Abuse should be called through to Women’s Aid on **0800 783 1359** or Men’s advice line on **0808 801 0327** or in emergencies contact the police on 999.

For properties that are outside of the above area, please use the national reporting numbers as listed above.

Timescales for responding to your report

Initial contact in all reported cases of Domestic Abuse will be within one working day to assess the level of severity and then formulate the agreed appropriate level and timescale of any action.

How reports of Domestic Abuse are dealt with

Our policy on Domestic Abuse along with our procedure, advice and signposting will be displayed on the Group website. In many cases the relevant support required will be delivered by specially trained officers who work for external agencies and the Group will signpost accordingly to these agencies. When the Group is required to take action, the procedure noted below will be followed:

- We will be victim led as to action taken, unless the information details safeguarding issues.
- We will treat all complaints confidentially and in accordance with relevant legislation.
- We will explain honestly what we can and cannot do and what support may be available to try to resolve issues and problems.
- If appropriate, an interview can be at a suitable location to suit the victim.
- If appropriate, interviews can be arranged with an officer of the same sex/culture.
- Interpreters will be provided if required and of the same gender, if the victim requires it.
- We will work with other agencies if appropriate to ensure that the level of advice and support needed is obtained.
- The Group may provide extra security measures to the victim's property if it is appropriate to do so.
- The Group will be sensitive to the needs of all victims.
- For cases that are open on the Group system, the case will only be closed when the action plan is complete and/or if no further action is appropriate or possible. This will always be discussed with the tenant/customer prior to closure.
- Once the case is closed, contact will be made from an appropriate officer to request feedback on how the case was managed.

Support for Complainants

Victim Support - This is a Charitable Organisation that will provide support and guidance for victims (complainants) of crime who are trying to rebuild their lives. The Group will provide you with contact details for this support service.

Housing Support – A referral can be made to a partner Support Team who may allocate a Housing Support Worker to provide additional support.

Additional Security Measures - In cases where a victim/witness is felt to be at risk of reprisals, either against themselves or their property, the Group may provide additional security measures, e.g. external lighting or additional locks.

Police Protection - If there is a risk of violence, the Police can support complainants and will take action to prevent intimidation of complainants, this may include Gazetteer notices or additional patrols.

Data Protection and Information Exchange

The Group has and will continue to develop protocols for sharing appropriate information with other agencies to enable us to prevent and resolve Domestic Abuse. This will be in accordance with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and any relevant legislation in force at the time.

Confidentiality

The Group will respect each complainant's request for confidentiality. We will always seek their permission before disclosing information to the perpetrators, their legal representatives and other interested parties.

Commitment to Employees

The Group will ensure that employees dealing with Domestic Abuse have received the appropriate training and support to enable them to deal effectively and confidently with the issues presented. The Group has set out in its Health and Safety Policy its approach to employee safety which will be applied at all times.

Monitoring and Review

Annual reports will be made to the Board to monitor the effectiveness and success of the policy. The policy will be reviewed every three years.