

Domestic Abuse Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse (DA) Policy sets out The Wrekin Housing Group's (The 'Group') approach to addressing DA and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- 1.2 Our approach to safeguarding aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and/or children who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse or neglect and to hold perpetrators DA to account.
- 1.3 The Group will meet its statutory safeguarding requirements in line with our existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a vulnerable resident or customer.
- 1.4 In cases of staff experiencing DA or VAWG, please refer to the Domestic Abuse (for employees) Policy and / or contact the People Services team.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The Group believes that residents of its homes should not live in fear of abuse or violence from someone they are, or were, personally connected to. This can be a current, or former partner or any other member of the household and we will look to assist and support any person experiencing, or who has experienced abuse or violence.
- 2.2 This policy details the principles for providing assistance and taking action in cases of domestic abuse and VAWG. Further information can be found by going to the Wrekin Housing Group website.
- 2.3 This policy aims to ensure that those who are subjected to domestic abuse are dealt with in an empathic and empowering manner, taking a person-centred approach ensuring we work in accordance with their needs. It aims to ensure that all employees act in a non-judgemental way.
- 2.4 The Group will support the role of DA Ambassadors, facilitating advice routes for officers dealing with cases of DA and support for internal employees.

3.0 Policy Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Group residents, household members and to those accessing the services of the Group.

4.0 Legal Definitions

- 4.1 Definition of “**domestic abuse**”:

4.1.1 Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- The behaviour is abusive.

4.2 Definition of “**abusive behaviour**”:

4.2.1 Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse;
- Violent or threatening behaviour;
- Controlling or coercive behaviour;
- Economic abuse;
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse; and
- It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

4.3 Definition of “**economic abuse**”:

4.3.1 “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to:

- Acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- Obtain goods or services.

4.4 For the purposes of this policy, behaviour is deemed to be A’s behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

4.5 Definition of “**personally connected**”:

4.5.1 Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies:

- They are, or have been, married to each other;
- They are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child;
- They are relatives.

4.6 Definition of a “parental relationship”

4.6.1 A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

- The person is a parent of the child, or
- The person has parental responsibility for the child.

4.7 Definition of “Children as victims” of domestic abuse:

4.7.1 A victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:

- Sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- Is related to “A” or “B”:
 - The person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
 - The child and the person are relatives.

4.8 Definition of “Controlling behaviour”: ‘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’.

4.9 Definition of “Coercive behaviour”: ‘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’.

4.10 Definition of “Stalking”: ‘Repeated, unwanted contact from one person to another which causes the victim to feel distressed or fearful’.

- It differs from harassment in that a perpetrator of stalking will be obsessed with or fixation on the individual(s) they are targeted.
- Stalking can take place in many forms in the workplace. Some stalkers are colleagues or clients of the victim, others are individuals who are unrelated to the workplace but who contact the victim there because of ease of access or to cause them further distress.
- Stalking behaviour can include nuisance telephone calls, sending excessive emails, being followed, sending gifts or letters, death threats, monitoring behaviour, visiting place of work, sexual assault, physical assault, and computer hacking.

4.11 Child Parent Abuse (CPA):

4.11.1 There is currently no legal definition of Child to Parent Abuse (CPA). However, it is increasingly recognised as a form of domestic abuse and, depending on the age of the ‘child’, it may fall under the government’s 2021 statutory definition of domestic abuse. “Child to Parent Abuse is complex and misunderstood – partly because it has historically been largely ignored in favour of a focus on intimate partner abuse, partly because it is drastically under-reported, and because there are lots of

misconceptions around the subject. Some parents may not recognise what is happening to them as abuse – but the behaviours they are experiencing are abuse, and they are not okay.”

Source: PEGS (Parental Education Growth Support) - www.pegssupport.co.uk/

5.0 Key Terms

5.1 The term **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** refers to the following range of serious crime types which are predominantly, **but not exclusively**, experienced by women and girls:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse;
- Sexual Offences;
- Stalking;
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour';
- Forced Marriage;
- Prostitution; and
- Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.

5.1.1 A full definition is provided in the VAWG guidance note.

5.2 **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** is a local process to help people at high risk of murder or serious harm. This includes a DA specialist (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor - IDVA), police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies.

5.3 Legal Reference:

- “Child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “Civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- “Parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “Relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The **Group Chief Executive** will be responsible for:

- Ensuring sufficient resources, including the provision of training is provided for those working directly with the Group's customers and tenants;
- Ensuring the policy is applied consistently and aligns with the Group's vision and values;
- Creating the sufficient structure with delegated organisational responsibilities for the implementation of this policy.

6.2 The **Executive Director of Operations** will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the necessary level of focus is given to the delivery of the service.

6.3 The **Head of Housing** will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the sufficient allocation of resources are available to deliver the service that meets the needs of the customer.
- Ensuring suitable monitoring and reporting mechanisms are in place to measure activity, performance and satisfaction with the service.

6.4 The **Neighbourhood Manager** will be responsible for:

- Reviewing the policy and making sure it recognises changes in statutory and legal requirements;
- Ensuring the policy is up to date and relevant in terms of best practice, both within and outside of the sector, with a particular focus on new and emerging government legislation;
- Ensuring that there is appropriate training, guidance and support available to appropriate employees to allow for the contents of the policy to be delivered on a day to day basis.

6.5 The **Housing Teams (General Needs, Retirement Living and ShireLiving)** will be responsible for:

- The day to day management of all cases in accordance with the policy;
- Ensuring that the best practice promoted in the policy is delivered on a daily basis;
- Ensuring that the necessary focus on supporting customers is applied.

6.6 All **Teams/staff** must:

- Refer to the policy and procedure
- Contact local housing team for advice
- Raise a concerns alert via intranet

7.0 Compliance

7.1 The policy complies with current legislation:

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004;
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021;
- Serious Crimes Act 2015
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997;
- The Family Law Act 1996;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Policy;
- The Housing Act 1996;
- The Equality Act 2010.

The Wrekin <u>Housing Group</u>	Policy control sheet Domestic Abuse Policy Policy reference number – 2023/031
Policy Author	Philip Heywood Neighbourhood Manager
Direct Lead	Nick Grubb Head of Housing
Version	V1.0: September 2023
Target audience	The Wrekin Housing Group residents and household members.
Consultation	Wrekin Voices (Tenants) Community Safety Partnership Practitioners and other internal employees Telford & Wrekin Council / Drug and Alcohol Action Team Staffordshire Women’s Aid Senior Managers Executive Management Group
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	No individuals or groups of people are disadvantaged by the adoption of this policy
Date of Data Privacy Impact Assessment	No personal data is processed as a result of the adoption of this policy.
Approving Body	Executive Management Group
Date of final approval	September 2023
Implementation date	September 2023
Monitoring arrangements	Monitoring by local Teams and by reports as required via management.
Review date	March 2026
Expiry date	September 2026
Review cycle	Three Year Review Cycle
Policy category	Customer Care
Associated policies and procedures	The Domestic Abuse Policy works alongside a number of other policies, corporate strategies and statutory obligations. The key ones are listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy • Tenancy Debt and Income Management Policy • Tenant Involvement • Allocations and Lettings Policy and Procedure • Health and Safety Policy • Tenancy Management Intervention Procedures • ASB, Hate Crime & Harassment Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Domestic Abuse (for employees) Policy; • Personal Safety and Lone Working Policy • Equal Opportunities Policy • Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy • Modern Slavery Statement
Policy location	SharePoint Website

Summary of changes table

Revision history			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised by & date
Philip Heywood	In line with Policy review cycle	V1.0: September 2023	Executive Management Group – September 2023