

Policy Title: Domestic Abuse Policy	
Author (Owner): Operations Director	Version: 2
Approved by: Executive Team	Date: September 2026
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1. Aims of the policy

1.1 The Social Housing Act 2023 commits the Regulator of Social Housing to ensuring that landlords introduce a policy and procedure under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard which sets out how they will tackle issues surrounding domestic abuse.

1.2 This policy sets out the principles that Soho Housing applies when responding to reports of domestic abuse.

1.3 This policy also ensures our approach to domestic abuse is in line with measures set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and provides a framework for how we tackle domestic abuse through early intervention, support for victims and perpetrators, partnership working and enforcement action.

1.4 This policy applies to all properties owned or managed by Soho Housing. This includes leasehold and shared ownership homes and reflects our commitment to manage and resolve domestic abuse reports.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy covers all residents, their household, tenants and leaseholders, whether they are the victim or the perpetrator.

3. Policy statement

3.1 Soho Housing recognises that domestic abuse occurs in every social class and across all age groups, regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, race or religion.

3.2 Soho Housing also recognises that domestic abuse disproportionately affects women, with most experiencing harm from a male partner or former partner. However, men, as well as trans and non-binary individuals, can also be victims and survivors.

3.3 We also recognise that abuse can occur within other family relationships, including between adult children and their parents or carers. We recognise and acknowledge the experiences of all victims and survivors and take a victim-centred approach.

3.4 When receiving a report from someone experiencing domestic abuse, we will listen and believe them, treat disclosures with confidentiality and sensitivity, focus on their immediate

safety without judgement, and support their right to decide on the actions and outcomes that are safest for them.

3.5 We commit to:

- 3.5.1 Ensuring our staff are trained to support those reporting domestic abuse
- 3.5.2 Giving victims the option of speaking to a staff member of a specific gender where possible.
- 3.5.3 Giving victims the option of meeting a staff member at their agreed choice of safe venue.
- 3.5.4 Agreeing on a method of contact that is convenient for the victim and how often and provide interpreting and translation services where needed along with making appropriate and timely safeguarding referrals.
- 3.5.5 Immediately prioritising the safety of the victim and any children and a safety-first approach in all housing decisions.
- 3.5.6 Respecting the autonomy of victims and involve them in decision-making whenever possible.
- 3.5.7 Maintaining confidentiality within legal and ethical boundaries and only share information with consent, unless there is a safeguarding or serious safety concern.
- 3.5.8 Referring cases of domestic abuse to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to share information to reduce risk to those involved and the whole family
- 3.5.9 Working with appropriate agencies (statutory and voluntary) to prevent, intervene and reduce the impact of domestic abuse and increase safety and wellbeing including improving the security of victim's homes by target hardening and referrals to the Sanctuary Scheme.
- 3.5.10 Providing comprehensive information about available support services, such as specialist domestic abuse advocacy and legal and financial advice.
- 3.5.11 Ensuring that any staff experiencing domestic abuse are supported.
- 3.5.12 Provide housing options and tenancy advice within the context of their individual circumstances.

4. Data protection and information sharing

4.1 We will not ask victims to provide proof or evidence, and we will deal with all reports of domestic abuse in confidence and in a non-judgmental and sympathetic manner.

4.2 We will respect and protect the confidentiality of all incidents of domestic abuse in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection

Regulations 2018. We will maintain the confidentiality of a disclosure regarding abuse to the extent that we are allowed to by law and unless to do so would result in significant harm or serious risk of harm to any person in any of the cases that are reported.

4.3 Under the Care Act 2014 and Children's Act 1989 and 2004 concerns for the safety of children or adults at risk of harm may meet the legal requirement to report these concerns. In such cases information can be shared with local authority safeguarding services, the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or other appropriate agencies.

4.4 All case notes will be held securely on our housing management system, Dynamics 365, including details of identified perpetrators. Cases referred to MARAC will be flagged on Dynamics 365 so that any potential risks are clearly visible.

5. Policy equality and diversity statement

5.1 We are committed to providing services that are fair, equitable, and inclusive. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no individual is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of any protected characteristic defined in the Equality Act 2010, and in line with our Reasonable Adjustments policy.

5.2 We recognise the gendered nature of domestic abuse and understand that it disproportionately affects women.

5.3 We acknowledge that domestic abuse exists within the wider context of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). These terms encompass a range of abusive behaviours, often intersecting, which primarily impact women and girls. We are committed to addressing these issues through our policies, effective support systems, and strong partnerships with local services.

5.4 At the same time, we recognise that men and boys can also be victims of domestic abuse. We understand that harmful stereotypes and stigma may prevent individuals from seeking help. We are committed to ensuring that our response is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all victims, regardless of gender.

5.5 We also recognise that some individuals may face additional barriers when accessing support and this includes, but is not limited to:

- People with disabilities, including parents of children with disabilities
- People of diverse sexual orientations
- People from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- Gender-fluid individuals
- People undergoing gender transition
- People with insecure immigration status
- Neurodiverse individuals
- People with experience of the criminal justice system
- People who use alcohol and/or drugs

- People who fear that disclosing abuse will also mean disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to family, employers, or immigration authorities
- People who are sceptical about whether services will be inclusive or knowledgeable
- People who under report due to fear of homophobia or transphobia from services

5.6 We recognise that certain groups may be disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and we will take additional steps to ensure equitable access to support.

5.7 These steps include providing:

- Translation and interpreter services
- British Sign Language (BSL) services
- Large print materials
- Access to private rooms for confidential interviews

5.8 We will ensure that our Domestic Abuse Policy and procedures are accessible to all service users and colleagues. We will actively consider and respond to diverse needs when taking action, ensuring that our approach remains inclusive, respectful, and effective.

6. Definition of Domestic Abuse

6.1 For the purpose of this policy, our definition of domestic abuse is the same as it is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

6.2 Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, domestic abuse is defined as:

6.3 The 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.

6.4 The behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following and involves a single incident or a course of conduct:

- 6.4.1 Physical or sexual abuse;
- 6.4.2 Violent or threatening behaviour;
- 6.4.3 Controlling or coercive behaviour;
- 6.4.4 Economic abuse;
- 6.4.5 Psychological, emotional or other abuse;

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

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

6.5.3 The behaviour of A may be abusive “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

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

- 6.6.1 They are, or have been, married to each other;

6.6.2 They are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

6.6.3 They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

6.6.4 They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

6.6.5 They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;

6.6.6 They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));

6.6.7 They are relatives.

6.7 A “child” means a person under the age of 18 years and they are considered to be a victim of domestic abuse where they:

6.7.1 See or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse, and

6.7.2 Are related to A or B.

6.8 Examples of domestic abuse can include but are not limited to:

6.8.1 **Verbal abuse** – name calling, humiliation, accusing, verbally threatening, degradation.

6.8.2 **Economic abuse** – control of and over economic resource access such as preventing employment or being able to claim of benefits.

6.8.3 **Financial abuse** – controlling money and bank accounts, allowing no say in how money is spent, running up debts in the victims name, theft of earnings or benefits.

6.8.4 **Coercive control** – tactics that enable a perpetrator to control a victim such as controlling daily activities, constant criticism, isolation from family and friends, extreme dominance, threats of violence and in extreme circumstances homicide.

6.8.5 **Psychological and emotional abuse** – creating isolation, humiliation, gaslighting and undermining behaviour.

6.8.6 **Stalking** – persistent and unwanted attention such as following, persistent unwanted calling or texting, monitoring social media, cyber stalking and online threats, covert surveillance.

6.8.7 **Online digital and tech abuse** – abusive behaviour via various forms of technology such as demanding access to devices, controlling access or using devices to monitor a victims movements.

6.8.8 **Revenge porn** – the distribution of intimate images or videos of someone, either on or offline without their consent.

6.8.9 **Disability abuse** – withholding or damaging medical equipment or mobility aids, refusing to assist with essential tasks such as appointments or caregiving (bathing, meals, etc) and manipulating access to medication.

6.8.10 Racial abuse – using racial slurs, enforcing racial stereotypes and excluding someone on the basis of their ethnicity.

6.8.11 LGBTQIA+ abuse – using a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity against them, threatening to 'out' someone, invalidating someone's sexual identity or orientation, using homophobic or transphobic slurs, controlling how someone expresses their identity.

6.8.12 Religious abuse – forcing religious beliefs, preventing a victim from practicing their faith, using religious texts to justify abuse.

6.8.13 Forced marriage – where a marriage is conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor.

6.8.14 'Honour Based' abuse – crimes or incidents of abuse that has or may have been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family and/or community.

6.8.15 Physical abuse – slapping, punching, kicking, slapping, stabbing, attempted murder and homicide

6.8.16 Sexual abuse – threats or intimidation to make a victim perform sexual acts, use of force, rape and non-consensual acts of sex

6.8.17 Female Genital Mutilation – also referred to as 'cutting' or female circumcision.

7. Responding to a report of domestic abuse

7.1 Domestic abuse can be reported to us:

- In person
- By email or telephone
- Via a third party – partner agencies such as Police, Social Services, Mental Health Teams, support services such as Galop, family, friends or neighbours.

7.2 Upon receiving a report of domestic abuse, we will aim to interview the victim within 24 hours, or at a time that is convenient to them.

7.3 We will support individuals experiencing violence against women and girls (VAWG), or domestic abuse irrespective of age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background, or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.

7.4 We will:

7.4.1 Adopt a victim-centred, risk-aware approach, offering support with compassion and without judgment, while respecting confidentiality and the individual's right to make their own decisions about their situation.

7.4.2 Not ask victims to provide evidence or proof and agree safe methods of contact such as safe email or safe phone times.

7.4.3 Not expect victims to stay in their home if they are unable to do so or if it may put them at further risk, and we will not make further enquiries without their consent.

7.4.4 If there is an immediate risk, staff must call 999 and refer the case to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) even if the individual refuses to give consent. If children are involved, staff must complete a safeguarding children referral to the appropriate local authority. Adult safeguarding referrals should also be completed for any at risk adults.

7.4.5 Where a victim has, or appears to have a cognitive impairment, and is unable to follow or fully understand the guidelines contained within this policy staff will complete a referral to Westminster Adult Social Care or Camden Central Access Team.

7.4.6 Complete a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based abuse (DASH) risk assessment. Where assessments are rated as “high risk” they will be immediately referred to the appropriate MARAC.

7.4.7 Acknowledge that victims who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community or are non-binary face additional barriers that increase vulnerability and will offer them referrals to specialist services that can provide additional support.

7.4.8 Attend multi-agency meetings including but not limited to Child in Need meetings and Child Protection Conferences.

7.4.9 Include housing needs at the initial assessment

7.4.10 Not contact the perpetrator or their family

7.4.11 Work with social workers, the Police and any other agency a victim may be involved with.

7.4.12 Provide practical support such as additional safety and security improvements, additional window and door locks and personal alarms to victims who wish to remain in their homes and protect them from further abuse.

7.4.13 Log all reports of domestic abuse on Dynamics 365 with clear markers that alert staff of the risk.

8. The perpetrator

8.1 We are expected to act when a perpetrator’s behaviour puts others at risk, including neighbours, partners, or children.

8.2 Domestic abuse perpetration is treated as serious anti-social behaviour (ASB) when it affects:

8.2.1 A partner in the home

8.2.2 Neighbours (noise, threats, harassment)

8.2.3 The wider community

8.3 Tenancy enforcement against perpetrators in domestic abuse cases is part of a wider safeguarding system where we protect victims by:

8.3.1 Intervening early

8.3.2 Coordinating with other agencies

8.3.3 Removing perpetrators to reduce harm

8.3.4 Referring victims to organisations like the National Centre For Domestic Violence (NCDV) to help them obtain court Orders such as Non-Molestation Orders, Occupation Orders and Prohibitive Steps Orders.

8.4 Under the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and our Antisocial Behaviour Policy we can seek to obtain Injunctions or Exclusion Orders or begin Possession proceedings (in cases where a victim has been forced to flee their home).

8.5 We will provide general housing advice to perpetrators and where the perpetrator is willing to confront their abusive behaviour, we will refer them to appropriate support services such as Domestic Violence Intervention Project, End the Fear, Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse, Respect or Refuge.

8.6 Our directory of support services for perpetrators of domestic abuse can be found in the Housing Management - Domestic Abuse folder in Sharepoint.

9. Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) or Claire's Law

9.1 Under the scheme, an individual or third party can ask law enforcement to check whether a current or former partner has a violent or abusive past.

9.2 Law enforcement should consider disclosing the information if records show that the individual may be at risk of domestic abuse.

9.3 Law enforcement may also make a disclosure to an individual if they receive information (for example, through a criminal investigation or from a third sector agency) about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may impact on the safety of that person's current or ex-partner.

9.4 Any disclosure made by law enforcement must be:

- Reasonable
- Proportionate
- based on a credible risk of harm

9.5 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) allows individuals to request information about a partner's past history of violence or abuse. This scheme operates through two pathways:

- "Right to Ask" (initiated by a member of the public) and
- "Right to Know" (initiated by the police).

9.6 The DVDS aims to prevent domestic abuse by giving potential victims the information they need to make informed decisions about their relationships. It increases public awareness of domestic abuse risks and ensures that police forces share information consistently and responsibly. By providing both reactive and proactive disclosure options, the scheme helps safeguard individuals and reduce the likelihood of further abuse.

10. Working in partnership

10.1 We will only share information when we have a lawful basis to do so and in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults and children living with domestic abuse.

10.2 All 'high risk' domestic abuse cases will automatically be referred to the appropriate local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

10.3 The MARAC is a local, multi-agency meeting at which information is shared in relation to high-risk cases of domestic abuse. Core participants include the police, probation services, health services, children's and adult social care, housing services, substance misuse services, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and relevant statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

10.4 The purpose of a MARAC is to facilitate the sharing of relevant, proportionate information in order to assess risk and to develop and implement a coordinated, multi-agency risk management plan. MARAC forms part of the wider coordinated community response to domestic abuse and includes consideration of the needs of victims, children, and other individuals at risk, as well as the behaviour of alleged perpetrators.

10.5 All agencies are responsible for sharing timely and accurate information in accordance with statutory duties and information sharing principles. This is necessary to support effective risk assessment, safeguard victims and children, and enable early intervention to prevent escalation.

10.6 The objectives of a MARAC are to:

10.6.1 Safeguard victims/survivors and their children by reducing the risk of harm

10.6.2 Identify and assess the level of risk posed by perpetrators, and ensure referral to appropriate processes, including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), where required

10.6.3 enable lawful and proportionate information sharing to support decision-making and risk management

10.6.4 Develop, implement, and monitor coordinated multi-agency risk management plans

10.6.5 Reduce repeat victimisation

10.6.6 Ensure clear accountability across participating agencies

10.6.7 Support practitioners managing high-risk domestic abuse cases

10.7 MARAC operates on the basis that no single agency will hold all relevant information and that effective safeguarding requires coordinated multi-agency working, with each agency contributing its knowledge and expertise to inform assessment and action.

11. Housing options

11.1 Due to limited stock within the Soho Housing portfolio it will not be possible to offer priority housing to domestic abuse victims in most cases.

11.2 When contacted by victims of domestic abuse who require rehousing, we will assist them to seek alternative accommodation via specialist agencies or the appropriate local authority.

11.3 Agencies include but are not limited to:

- **Pan London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR)**
The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal is a collaborative initiative designed to provide safe and affordable housing for individuals fleeing domestic abuse and other forms of violence across London.
- **Galop**
Galop are a service run by LGBT+ people, for LGBT+ people and specialise in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, so-called conversion therapies, and other forms of interpersonal abuse. They provide advocacy, emergency housing, medical and emotional support
- **Stonewall Housing**
The leading national charity supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) people of all ages who live in the UK and are experiencing homelessness or living in an unsafe environment.
- **Refuge**
Refuge is the largest domestic abuse organisation in the UK and they provide safe, confidential housing for people fleeing abuse. Services include 24/7 support from trained staff, specialist advocates (IDVAs) to help survivors, emotional support, safety planning, support for children and young people, financial and welfare support and housing and resettlement help. They offer end-to-end support from emergency escape and safety, through legal and emotional support, to long-term recovery and independence.
- **Shelter**
Shelter provide housing advice and homelessness support and helps survivors understand their rights to stay in or leave a home safely. They can help victims find emergency accommodation (including refuges) apply as homeless to the council and access social housing or temporary housing.
- **Hestia**
Hestia provides a multi-layered domestic abuse service which includes crisis support (refuges and safety), ongoing support (advocacy and community outreach), recovery (practical help and children's services), prevention (safe spaces).
- **Housing for Women**
Housing for Women is a registered charity and independent housing association that combines housing provision with gender-specific support. They focus on helping women (especially vulnerable groups) access safe housing and rebuild independence after abuse.
- **Emaan Refuge**
Emaan Refuge is a specialist women-only domestic abuse refuge based in

Birmingham, with a strong focus on culturally sensitive support for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and migrant women. They also accept referrals from across the UK, including from women with no recourse to public funds.

- **BAME domestic abuse organisations in London**

Southall Black Sisters, AWRC, LBWP, and Solace Women's Aid provide culturally specific refuge, advocacy, counselling, and legal support to Black, Asian and minority ethnic women, often addressing additional barriers such as immigration status, language needs, and honour-based or forced marriage abuse.

- **Camden and Westminster Housing Teams**

Under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) local authorities have a statutory duty to provide advice and prevention support if someone is at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse. They must carry out homelessness assessments and personalised housing plans, provide temporary accommodation to those who are eligible and recognise domestic abuse victims as having priority need for housing

12. Raising awareness

12.1 We're committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and ensuring that our customers and communities are clear on our position. This may include giving information in newsletters, customer communications and on our website. We'll regularly publicise information and best practice on our internal and social media platforms.

13. Policy equality and diversity statement

13.1 We are committed to valuing and promoting equality and diversity. We recognise we have a duty to eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination in the services we provide and to promote and value respect in everything we do. We expect our staff to share these values and treat all customers with fairness and respect.

14. Legislation, Regulations and Guidance

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Domestic Abuse Act 2021 | • Equality Act 2010 |
| • Family Law Act 1996 | • ASB, Crime and Policing Act 1989 and 2014 |
| • Protection from Harassment Act 1997 | • Serious Crime Act 2015 |
| • Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 | • Care Act 2014 |
| • Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 | • Offences Against the Person Act 1861 |
| • Civil Partnership Act 2004 | • Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) |
| • Homelessness Act 2002 | • Crime and Security Act 2010 |
| • Housing Act 1988 and 1996 | • Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 |
| • The Human Rights Act 1998 | |
| • The Children Act 2004 | |

- Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard guidelines 2024

Policy Review and Version Control

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Version	Type of Change	Date	Revisions from previous issue	Approved By
1	Creation of policy	Sept 2022	NA	Exec
2	Review and Redraft	Sept 2026	Policy redrafted to reflect changes and updates made to inter-dependant legislation	Exec