

Domestic violence and abuse policy

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Staff affected	Operations
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Contents

Purpose	3
Scope	3
Aims and objectives	3
Definition	3
Context.....	4
Prevention.....	4
Action	5
Training	6
Legislation.....	6
Reporting domestic abuse	6
Related policies	6
Reviewing and monitoring	6
Publishing the policy	6

Purpose

Local Space has a zero-tolerance policy on domestic abuse and is committed to being proactive in supporting victims living in properties we manage. We strive to:

- Ensure that every person in our care is safe from fear and abuse.
- Affirm that domestic abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Recognise that domestic abuse involves control and manipulation, and that it has significant impacts on children, making it a critical child protection issue.
- Acknowledge that violence in relationships is not only an abuse of power but also a criminal offence.
- Recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality, or ethnicity. We also recognise that domestic abuse affects both male and female victims, including those in LGBTQ+ relationships. We are committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of gender or sexuality.
- Ensure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse is supported and protected from further harm.
- Hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and support justice for victims.

Scope

This policy is intended for everyone (complainant or witness) who wishes to report incidents of domestic abuse which occurred in or around properties managed by Local Space.

Local Space employees and its contractors have a responsibility under this policy, when carrying out their duties, to record and report domestic abuse.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To establish a culture that results in domestic abuse being investigated, challenged and overcome.
- To take action and prevent or address domestic abuse happening in the properties managed by Local Space.
- To record, monitor and investigate all incidents of domestic abuse.
- To support victims of domestic abuse through a multi-agency approach.

Definition

[The UK Government definition](#) states that domestic violence and abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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 sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual

- financial
- emotional

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 their victim.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Context

Whichever of these forms it takes, domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident, and should instead be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim. Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth, and geography. The figures below show, however, that it consists mainly of violence by men against women.

The most recent data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in November 2023 showed that:

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over (1.4 million women and 751,000 men) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023.
- The police recorded 889,918 domestic abuse-related crimes in the year ending March 2023.
- There were 51,288 domestic abuse-related prosecutions in England and Wales for the year ending March 2023.

Domestic abuse impacts on the health and welfare of children and young people. Children are often aware of what's happening, and they are likely to be affected by the fear, distress and disruption to their lives. There is also an overlap between abuse of women and abuse of children. Where the safety and welfare of children are a concern, we will deal with it in accordance with our safeguarding policy and procedure.

Prevention

Complaints of domestic abuse can be made at any time in a range of different ways. We will provide support for victims and ensure perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. We will:

- Publicise our approach to domestic abuse to all our residents.
- Ensure that tenancy conditions highlight the types of behaviour that is unacceptable.
- Treat all complaints of domestic abuse seriously.
- Work closely with external agencies to raise awareness of domestic abuse.
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Action

Victims

Where a resident reports or can show there have been acts of violence, abuse or serious threats of violence by one member of a household against another person or persons in that household, we will:

- Investigate thoroughly in a non-judgemental way and enable residents to report domestic abuse to us in different ways, including in person, in writing, over the phone, online or in a convenient safe meeting place.
- Agree an action plan with the victim, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them. Where necessary and with permission from the victim, we will contact specialist advice and support agencies.
- Give victims the opportunity to opt for a staff member of the same gender to deal with their case.
- Ensure that victims know that they can meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue. We will also agree the method of contact that the victim wishes us to use to stay in contact with them.
- Local Space will participate in multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) where information is shared between agencies involved in domestic abuse and they produce multi-agency action plans in response to issues of high risk. For cases which meet the MARAC risk rating threshold or if we have child protection concerns, we have a legal duty to share this with agencies.
- Liaise and share information with the police and other agencies to ensure effective action is taken against the perpetrator.
- Help victims to maintain their tenancies or apply to the local authority for rehousing (temporary or permanent) under homelessness legislation.
- Consider referrals to a different area under a mobility scheme.
- Improve the security of the property for the victim if they remain in the home.
- Give advice on the legal position regarding the tenancy, including options for ending a joint tenancy by the party fleeing violence/abuse and in seeking non-molestation orders.
- Work with other agencies to provide support for victims and witnesses if cases go to court.
- Give victims clear explanations of our actions.
- Treat all personal information in confidence.
- Respect the choices of the victim.

Perpetrators

If there is evidence that an incidence of domestic abuse has taken place, we will take appropriate action against the perpetrator to remove them from the property. We will take enforcement action and work with the police to assist a prosecution when any of the following situations occur:

- The tenancy has been ended by the party fleeing domestic abuse, leaving the perpetrator as an unauthorised occupant in the property.
- The tenancy has not yet been ended by either party, but domestic abuse has taken place, which is a breach of the tenancy agreement.

Training

Staff will be trained to deal with complaints of domestic abuse in a sensitive manner and how to direct victims to the appropriate support agencies.

Legislation

The physical manifestations of domestic abuse are criminal offences; the nonphysical forms may also amount to offences. This policy has been developed to support our legal and statutory duties:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (to do all we reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the area).
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
- Human Rights Act 1998 (articles 2 and 8).
- Housing Act 1996, part VII (to assist people fleeing domestic abuse with finding suitable accommodation and to secure alternative accommodation for those who are accepted as homeless through domestic abuse).
- Children Act 1989 and 2004 (to protect children and young people).

Reporting domestic abuse

All domestic abuse incidents will be recorded on a domestic abuse monitoring form. This information will be passed to relevant agencies where appropriate and in agreement with the victim.

Related policies

This policy is underpinned by our antisocial behaviour policy.

Reviewing and monitoring

This domestic abuse policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with business need or changes in regulation and/or legislation. Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to staff as a result of any changes.

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored by measuring the:

- Numbers of cases and actions taken.
- Satisfaction of victims and witnesses at the action taken.

In addition, we will present an annual domestic abuse report to our Board of Directors.

Publishing the policy

This policy will be available on our website and can be provided in a range of formats upon request.