

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS POLICY

FOR TENANTS, LEASEHOLDERS
AND
THOSE APPROACHING THE
COUNCIL AS HOMELESS

Approved December 2024

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all Haringey Council tenants, leaseholders and those approaching the Council as homeless because of domestic abuse.
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with our Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, which highlights priority areas for addressing and preventing domestic abuse and VAWG in Haringey.
- 1.3 When we use the terms 'we', 'our', and 'us' we mean Haringey Council in this policy.

2 Aim of the policy

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to improve the safety of those asking for assistance from our housing service who are affected by domestic abuse and other abuses that come under the 'Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)' umbrella including men and boys.
- 2.2 The safety of victim/survivors is a council priority in collaboration with our partners and registered providers.

This policy sets out how we will:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse in our housing service and help to prevent further abuse by encouraging earlier reporting
- Respond rapidly, safely and supportively
- Base our support on the victim/survivor's individual needs and working positively with them to offer support allowing them to make informed choices about what to do next, including enabling access to specialist support
- Deliver in collaboration with our partners a multi-agency approach to ensure a joined-up service that helps people approaching our housing service affected by domestic abuse and VAWG
- Recognise that not all people affected by abuse see themselves as victims/survivors. Within our practices, and particularly when engaging directly with those who are, or have been victim/survivors of domestic abuse, we will use the terms of address that they prefer where it is possible to do so.
- Ensure that staff have regular training relevant to their roles and that the latest leading practice is shared with staff and tenants as part of our continuous improvement approach.

3 Definitions and key terms

Definition of “Domestic Abuse”

- 3.1 This policy uses an abridged version of the definition of domestic abuse provided by the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#).
- 3.2 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:

“Personally connected” means:

- 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

And

- the behaviour is abusive

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

It **does not matter** whether the behaviour is a single incident or a course of actions: behaviour of this kind is domestic 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 their victim.

Coercive control is when a person with whom they are **personally connected**, repeatedly behaves in a way which makes you feel controlled, dependent, isolated or scared.

The following types of behaviour are some examples of coercive control, though not an exhaustive list:

- isolating you from your friends and family
- controlling how much money you have and how you spend it
- monitoring your activities and your movements
- repeatedly putting you down, calling you names or telling you that you are worthless
- threatening to harm or kill you, your child, family members or pets
- threatening to publish information about you, or threatening to share intimate images or videos
- threatening to report you to the police or the authorities
- damaging your property or household goods
- forcing you to take part in criminal activity or child abuse
- Ongoing harassing behaviour including harassment via digital means

Personally connected

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. Personally connected is defined in the act as people who:

- Are married to each other
- Are civil partners of each other
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- Are relatives
- Children aged under 18 years old are also recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator

So-Called Honour Based Abuse (HBA) is an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/ or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour.

The Hearthstone Domestic Abuse Advice and Support Service was established in 2007 following a review of domestic abuse cases in Haringey with the aim of bringing together those services who were involved in supporting victim/survivors of domestic abuse.

Hearthstone offers emotional and practical support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse in Haringey age 17+. The service work together with several other statutory and voluntary sector organisations to provide a holistic package of emotional and practical support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse in Haringey. Services within the package include legal advice on civil remedies such as injunctions, housing advice including access to refuge accommodation, access to counselling, safety planning and sanctuary home security improvements.

An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) is a specialist professional who works with a victim/survivor of domestic abuse to develop a trusting relationship. They can help a victim/survivor with everything they need to become safe and rebuild their life and represent their voice at a Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), as well as helping them to navigate the criminal justice process and working with the different statutory agencies to provide wraparound support.

A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (or MARAC) is a meeting that is held to discuss high risk cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence, to share information and to safely plan to safeguard a victim/survivor. MARACs are attended by representatives from a range of statutory services, such as the Police, NHS, Council services, and members of the Voluntary and Community Sector including specialist domestic abuse providers. Haringey holds MARACs every three weeks to discuss, and safety-plan, cases of domestic abuse in the borough.

The Sanctuary Scheme in Haringey involves enhancing security measures in the property such as reinforcing exterior doors and adding extra doors and window locks. It is informed by a comprehensive risk assessment which is conducted by the community safety unit in the Metropolitan Police. As part of the risk assessment, the condition of the property and the needs and the circumstances of the individual households are assessed.

The scheme is available to all victim/survivors of domestic abuse (including so-called honour based abuse), and this includes victim/survivors living in council stock, Housing Association and private tenants.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is an umbrella term which includes:

- Domestic Abuse
- Coercive and Controlling Behaviour
- Rape, Sexual Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation
- Forced Marriage
- So-called 'Honour' Based Abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Sexual Harassment and Bullying
- Stalking & Harassment
- Girls and gang violence
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Whilst men and boys can also experience these forms of abuse and harm, data demonstrates that these crimes and their associated harmful impacts are disproportionately experienced by women and girls, overwhelmingly perpetrated against them by men and boys. The prevalence of these abuses against women and girls is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. As a result, a gendered approach which recognises and understands the attitudes and structures that underpin these crimes is fundamental to properly address VAWG.

However, the use of this term cannot and should not negate the experiences of, or provisions for, men and boys who experience these abuses and crimes. We also recognise that the profoundly gendered nature of these crimes can itself act as a barrier to disclosure for victim/survivors who are not women and girls.

4 Reporting domestic abuse

- 4.1 All reports of domestic abuse to our housing service will be taken seriously. The safety of victim/survivors is crucial. Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we will always treat people experiencing abuse in a sympathetic, supportive, and nonjudgemental way.
- 4.2 A making every contact count approach will be taken for all disclosures. In practice, we will ensure that all staff members understand how to provide support for victim/survivors by using the most appropriate language and communication methods.
- 4.3 We will make sure anyone can report domestic abuse to us through any contact they have with us, for example, by telephone, email, in person or in writing.
- 4.4 We will adopt a preventative approach through our staff training and work within our resident and community engagement to ensure that we can identify any support, or intervention needs as early as possible.
- 4.5 Although domestic abuse can affect anyone, certain people may be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups are affected by specific forms of domestic abuse.
- 4.6 We understand that victims' experiences of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background, for example, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, maternity status, age, religion or race. We know that certain individuals may therefore face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and will consider the individual needs of each victim/survivor when tailoring our approach and support.
- 4.7 We know there can be a number of cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse and will take this into account in the support we provide.
- 4.8 We will provide independent translators and interpreters to support effective communication in other languages or formats as needed. This will ensure that translation is not provided through family members or associates to the family. Our approach also recognises that even where victim/survivors are proficient English speakers, in times of high stress the opportunity to speak in their first language can be vital.
- 4.9 We will ensure that people experiencing DA or VAWG know they can meet staff in confidence and emotional safety at our offices, or at an agreed choice of safe venue. We will also agree the method of contact the individual wishes us to use.
- 4.10 If someone is concerned about one of their neighbours and think they may be experiencing domestic abuse they can contact their housing manager if they are a tenant or contact the council directly to report concerns.
- 4.11 If someone is in immediate danger, please contact the Police on 999.

5 Action

- 5.1 We will make sure the individual experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG is always aware of our response and that they agree any actions outlined in an action plan. The action plan will be monitored and reviewed at a frequency agreed with them.
- 5.2 We will work in partnership with DA/VAWG services and take responsibility for referring our tenants, leaseholders or those approaching the council as homeless into services where they consent for us to do so.
- 5.3 We will offer interviews with a member of our housing service of the same gender.
- 5.4 We will also ensure that tenants, leaseholders and those approaching the council as homeless are informed of any relevant 'by and for' specialist services. These services may provide support tailored to elements of their identity and lived experience in relation to particular protected characteristics (e.g. age, disability, ethnicity, faith). Information on these services can be found on the [Domestic Abuse services page](#).
- 5.5 Actions we take will be informed by a risk assessment of the person's case and may include:
- A referral for specialist DA/VAWG support or alternative housing
 - A referral to our Financial Inclusion Team or other relevant services for any required support relating to financial issues and/or
 - Signposting to relevant organisations that provide legal advice
 - Supporting victim/survivors who wish to remain in their current property, where it is safe to do so, by providing safety and supportive actions including:
 - Additional security in their home through the Sanctuary Scheme
 - Referring to specialist DA/VAWG support who can help obtaining Non-Molestation and Occupation Orders.
 - Supporting victims who wish to relocate because it is not safe, or preferable, for them to not remain at their address because of domestic abuse, by providing guidance and assisting their move to alternative accommodation which is legally suitable if a homeless application is taken.
- 5.6 We will take an intersectional approach when responding to domestic abuse by considering how a person's experience of domestic abuse may be impacted by their sex, age, gender identity, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, pregnancy status, social background, or a combination of these differences.
- 5.7 A significant number of adults or children who experience domestic abuse will also require safeguarding. Employees are trained to be aware of this and to make safeguarding referrals as needed to ensure that people are protected in line with our safeguarding tenants and leaseholders policy. It is important to remember that disclosing abuse will often be a particularly vulnerable and frightening time for victim/survivors. Safeguarding concerns and referrals should be communicated considerately and without victim/survivors feeling blamed for the risks that they and their children have been subjected to.

- 5.8 Where we have a record of vulnerability through our multi agency arena, we will work in a collaborative way with partners to provide wrap around support and early intervention.
- 5.9 Where tenants, leaseholders and those approaching the council as homeless make disclosures to officers regarding their situation but do not wish to access specialist domestic abuse support, this does not mean that help is not available, and Housing Officers will support and discuss with them the options available.

6 Holding perpetrators to account

- 6.1 We will take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse in our housing services by holding perpetrators of abuse to account for their behaviour and the consequences of their action.
- 6.2 Our approach is survivor-centred, this means we will consider the views and ongoing safety and housing security of the victim/survivor when deciding the most appropriate course of action.
- 6.3 We reserve the right to take enforcement action based on evidence against our tenants, using the powers available under the Housing Act, up to and including terminating a tenancy, for domestic abuse or VAWG related offences.
- 6.4 Holding perpetrators to account is included in our staff training.
- 6.5 Where somebody discloses that they are using abusive behaviours / perpetrating domestic abuse in their relationship we will seek to engage and build trust with them. We will empower them to access behaviour intervention services, mental health, substance use and any other services that may meet their needs and potentially reduce the risk of harm that they pose to survivors and support them to take responsibility for their actions. This will be done in a way that does not collude with perpetrators or condone their use of abusive behaviours.
- 6.6 Any engagement with perpetrators will be done carefully, skilfully and in collaboration with specialist services and informed and led by the victim/survivor's safety, needs and wishes.
- 6.7 We accept that there may be incidents involving residents which fall under the umbrella term VAWG, such as harassment or abuse, however this would not be considered domestic abuse due to the requirement of a personal connection. In these instances, this would be dealt with under other relevant policies where it is more appropriate, such as our Anti-Social Behaviour policy and Safeguarding council tenants and leaseholders policy.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 We will work in collaboration with relevant agencies to gather and share information to inform and reduce risk when responding to domestic abuse. We will do this through either Haringey's MARAC, or through making referrals to specialist services (including IDVA services, specialist domestic abuse floating support services) where the victim/survivor consents.
- 7.2 We will consider each person's circumstances and the different courses of action that may be possible and appropriate, and work with victims/survivors in a way that aims to support their empowerment following experiences of abuse
- 7.3 We will ensure that the safety of victims/survivors remains at the heart of our response and is prioritised in all actions.

8 Awareness of domestic abuse

- 8.1 We will ensure that all housing staff, contractors, and agents regularly receive high-quality training on domestic abuse awareness.
- 8.2 We will widely publicise information and support local/national campaigns to raise awareness about domestic abuse including the different types of domestic abuse. This will ensure that victim/survivors know that help is available, how they can access it, and what support typically involves.
- 8.3 Our publicity will ensure that victims/survivors from different identity groups see themselves represented and are encouraged to disclose confidently knowing that their needs will be recognised, understood, and addressed.
- 8.4 We will provide information to tenants about the support we provide around domestic abuse when tenants move into their council home.
- 8.5 [Our website](#) includes information on how to find support if an individual or someone they know has experienced domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. This also includes a list of services to meet more specialist needs such as [nia](#), [Men's advice line](#), [Solace](#), [the Lighthouse](#), [IMECE](#) and [Galop](#).

9 Confidentiality and data protection

- 9.1 We will not share information in relation to violence and abuse with relevant agencies, without the consent of the person experiencing Domestic Abuse, unless required to do so by law or unless the information is necessary to protect a child or an adult at risk.
- 9.2 We will not share a victim/survivor's address once they've moved into safe accommodation without the victim/survivor's consent. We are very conscious about the risks of the perpetrator obtaining that new address because we know this can present serious risks and distress for the victim/survivor.
- 9.3 Where individuals, service providers, tenants or leaseholders could be at risk of significant harm, the General Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR) enables the lawful sharing of information although it is best practice to first seek the person's permission to disclose unless it may place anyone at further risk of harm.

- 9.4 We are open and honest about confidentiality, ensuring that victims/ survivors understand the basis on which we will be required to share relevant information with partners.
- 9.5 We will ensure that any information recorded about domestic abuse is stored securely with access provided only to relevant officers as appropriate.

10 Links to other policies and strategies

10.1 This policy links to and should be read together with the following Haringey Council policies and strategies:

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| Data Protection policy | Safeguarding policy |
| Haringey Domestic Abuse strategy 2023 – 2028 | Safeguarding council tenants and leaseholders policy |
| Haringey’s VAWG Strategy 2016 – 2026 | Translation and Interpretation policy |
| Housing allocations policy | Vulnerable tenants and leaseholders policy |
| Responsive Repairs policy | |

11 Resident co-design and engagement

11.1 When did you discuss development of this policy with residents?

At meetings of the Council’s Resident Voice Board in July and September 2024.

11.2 What did they tell you?

Being clear that the policy is designed to improve the safety of all people affected by domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) by clarifying that support is available for all victim/survivor’s, including men and boys.

The Board wanted clarification on the policy approach to supporting female tenants in our council housing who are subject to abusive behaviour from males who they have no personal connection with and to say how we hold those perpetrators to account. Confirmation was also sought on whether stalking was included in the policy’s definition and approach.

11.3 How has what residents told us informed development of this policy?

We have clarified that the aim of the policy is to improve the safety of all people affected by domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) regardless of who they affect and to support all victim/survivor’s, including men and boys. The policy also confirms that the use of the term VAWG cannot and should not negate the experiences of, or provisions for, male victims of these crimes.

We have added at section 6.6 that there may be incidents involving residents which fall under the umbrella term VAWG, such as harassment or abuse. The policy notes, however, that this would not be considered domestic abuse due to the requirement of a personal connection. In these instances, this would be dealt with under other relevant policies where it is more appropriate, such as the Anti-Social Behaviour policy and the safeguarding council tenants and leaseholders policy.

Section 3 on definitions and key terms includes an explanation of the term Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), this includes stalking and harassment within that definition.

12 Equality Impact Assessment

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared as part of the development of this policy.

13 Reviewing the policy

13.1 We will review this policy every three years with the next review date due in December 2027 unless earlier events or legislation require an earlier update to the policy.

14 Legislation

14.1 As the landlord, we will ensure that we carry out domestic abuse and VAWG policy in accordance with statutory requirements and best practice as follows:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 | Housing Act 1996 |
| Care Act 2014 | Human Rights Act 1998 |
| Children Act 2004 | Online Safety Act 2023 |
| Data Protection Act 2018 | Police and Justice Act 2006 |
| Domestic Abuse Act 2021 | Protection from Harassment Act 1997 |
| Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 | Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 |
| Equality Act 2010 | Serious Crime Act 2015 |
| Family Law Act 1996 | Social Housing Regulation (2023) Act |
| Claire's Law – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) | |