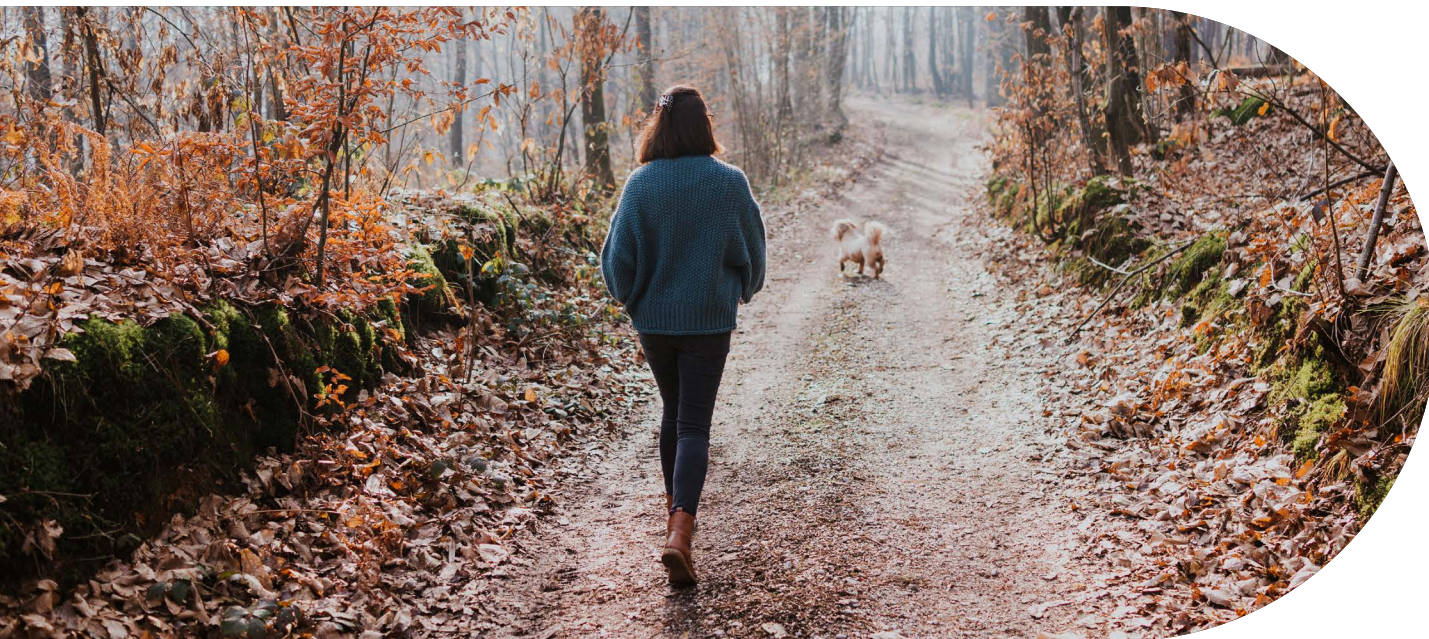


DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

City Housing Tenants





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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Birmingham City Council is committed to tackling domestic abuse, our shared vision is that 'Birmingham is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships, and live free from domestic abuse'. Domestic abuse can have a harmful impact on a person's quality of life, their family and friends, home and working life. We also recognise the devastating and profound trauma that domestic abuse can have on children and young people and the importance of them growing up in a safe and secure home, free from violence and abuse.
- 1.2. Birmingham City Housing recognises the important role that it plays in recognising, responding to, and supporting those affected by domestic abuse, including referring survivors to specialist support services. This policy outlines our response to domestic abuse when it affects our tenants, and the support we will offer to survivors. We are committed to a zero-tolerance approach and will use this policy to ensure that those responsible for abuse are held accountable for their actions.
- 1.3. Our city-wide **Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+** sets out our priorities for preventing domestic abuse from happening in the first place and preventing abuse from escalating. We are committed to being survivor-centred and survivor-led, using a strength-based approach, early intervention and prevention, accountability, intersectionality, and robust partnership working. Part of this approach is ensuring that our policy and procedure for tenants help us practice these values. Tenants experiencing domestic abuse should be able to expect a constructive, supportive and compassionate response.



2. WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

- 2.1.** Domestic Abuse is defined within the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#).
- 2.2.** Within the Act, domestic abuse is referred to as abusive behaviour which one person exhibits towards another. It must take place between two individuals aged 16 years or over who are connected to each other. This could, for example, include individuals who are (or previously have been) married or in a civil partnership or an intimate personal relationship, or who have a child together. This is regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It could include individuals who are related to each other. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of their gender identity, sex, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, or background.
- 2.3.** Children are also recognised as victims of domestic abuse if they witness or experience the effects of domestic abuse of one parent by another.
- 2.4.** It is recognised under the Act that domestic abuse is a gendered crime with the vast majority of survivors being women, as a result of misogyny. Women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence and be subjected to sustained physical, psychological, emotional abuse and coercive control. However, we are acutely aware that domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, sex, sexuality, gender, race, religion or belief, socioeconomic circumstances or any disability or limiting condition they may have.

3. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 3.1.** This Policy applies to all City Council tenants who are subject to domestic abuse, and who are perpetrating domestic abuse. The City Council operates a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. All perpetrators must be held to account for their actions, and we are committed to taking appropriate action to safeguard survivors and prevent further harm.
- 3.2.** City Housing staff have a shared responsibility to respond appropriately and effectively to reports of domestic abuse, ensuring survivors are supported, and that interventions are timely, and survivor led.

4. RECOGNISING

- 4.1.** City Housing take all reports of domestic abuse seriously. Domestic abuse is a crime, and we are committed to supporting any tenant experiencing it with compassion, confidentiality and urgency.
- 4.2.** You can report domestic abuse to us through any contact you have with us, for example, through by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. We will make sure anyone can report domestic abuse to us, providing interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed.
- 4.3.** Domestic abuse is often referred to as a “hidden crime”. City Housing ensures all staff are equipped with the right skills, through a programme of ongoing training and development, so that they can recognise the signs and deal confidently with domestic abuse.

5. RESPONDING

- 5.1. Our approach is survivor-centred and survivor-led, we will consider your views and ongoing safety when agreeing an action plan with you. We will ensure survivors are always aware of our response and that any actions are agreed.
- 5.2. If you report domestic abuse to City Housing, we will respond within 24-working hours, offering you support and agree a safe method of contact with you. As a City Council tenant, we can help you stay in your home or discuss your other housing options. For more information, please [Click Here](#).
- 5.3. Where safeguarding concerns of any child(ren) or vulnerable adults are identified, City Housing staff have a duty to refer to the City Council's Children and Adults Safeguarding policies and act in accordance with guidance set out in these policies.
- 5.4. We will use a full range of tools and remedies as appropriate, considering the needs of each survivor's case. We will advise about possible courses of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with it longer term, including:

Timely Response: Operating a 'front door' approach with contact being made within 24 working-hours of disclosure, ensuring safe communication.

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence Risk Indicator Checklist: We will use the checklist to assess the level of risk to survivors and inform appropriate safeguarding actions, referrals, and multi-agency responses, including MARAC where necessary.

Early Intervention: Training staff to identify early signs of abuse through home visits, guidance, and referrals.

Supporting Survivors to remain in their Home: Offering legal, financial, and practical support to enable survivors to remain in their homes, where it is safe to do so.

Maximising Security: Maximising security at survivors' homes by referring to the Sanctuary Scheme for consideration of enhanced safety measures. This can include additional locks, door chains, fire safety equipment, and security lighting etc.

Holding Perpetrators to Account: Taking legal action where appropriate, such as a Civil Injunction to safeguard survivors and their children. Any tenant who is found to be perpetrating domestic abuse may be considered in breach of their tenancy conditions.

Housing Solutions: Providing advice on homelessness applications, temporary accommodation, and social housing options, however, wherever possible, we will help survivors remain in their own home, where it is safe to do so.

Partnership Working: Encouraging and maintaining multi-agency working to ensure a seamless service to survivors and their children and families, including working closely with Birmingham Children's Trust and Adults Social Care. Also, collaborating with local housing providers to prevent homelessness and support safe housing pathways.

Inclusive Practice: Embedding anti-racist and intersectional approaches in our response, recognising and addressing unique barriers.

Accessible Services: Making our service accessible to survivors and accommodate any additional service needs, ie, English not a first language and the use of interpreters.

Legal Support: Considering protective legal measures such as Civil Injunctions. Outline legal options available for joint tenants to protect their housing rights and safety.

Financial Guidance: Offering support on welfare benefits, rent arrears, and repairs related to domestic abuse.

Raise Awareness: Increasing understanding of domestic abuse among tenants, staff, contractors, and Birmingham's communities.

Public Awareness: Promoting reporting channels through our website, social media, and tenant engagement events.

Training & Development: Ensuring all staff are equipped with the right skills, through a programme of ongoing training and development, so that they can recognise the signs and respond confidently with domestic abuse as part of our early intervention strategy.

Police & Procedures: Updating policies and procedures to fall in line with any new legislation.

Information Sharing: Providing transparency around information sharing and safeguarding duties with other agencies, such as Multi Agency Referral and Conference (MARAC) meetings.

Monitoring and Review: Regularly assess officer casework to ensure best practices and positive outcomes. We will also measure key performance to ensure our services are effective, accountable and survivor focussed.

6. DUTIES TO THOSE HOMELESS OR THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS

- 6.1.** Birmingham City Council recognises domestic abuse as a leading cause of homelessness and is committed to a trauma-informed, survivor-centred response. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024–2029 sets out a city-wide ambition to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring, with a strong emphasis on early intervention and multi-agency collaboration.

Survivors of domestic abuse are a priority group within this strategy, and the Council continues to develop tailored support pathways, including safe accommodation options and wraparound services.

- 6.2.** Survivors of domestic abuse have a right to make a homeless application if they feel it is unsafe for them to continue to reside in their accommodation. Under [Section 177 \(1\) of the Housing Act 1996](#) if someone is facing violence or threats of violence from another person, and those threats are likely to happen, then it is not reasonable to expect them to stay in their own home. Domestic abuse doesn't have to happen inside the home and can happen anywhere; this still counts under the law.

- 6.3.** Under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996, where a person applies to the Local Housing Authority for accommodation, or for assistance in obtaining accommodation, and the Authority has reason to believe that the application may homeless or threatened with homelessness, it is under statutory duty to make inquiries to determine:

- Whether the person is eligible for assistance.
- Whether the person is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- 6.4.** Housing Support Services (HSS) and Housing Management (HM) will work collaboratively to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies where it is safe and appropriate to do so. This will be achieved by strengthening operational links between HSS and HM teams, and by promoting the use of protective measures such as the Sanctuary Scheme to enable survivors to remain safely in their homes. This approach helps to prevent homelessness and promotes tenancy stability for survivors.

7. REFERRING

We know that domestic abuse can affect anyone. If you need support for domestic abuse:

For Women

Domestic Abuse Hub - Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid - <https://bswaid.org/>

For men:

Trident Group - <https://tridentgroup.org.uk/care-support/domestic-abuse-services>

For LGBTQ+ people:

Birmingham LGBT - <https://blgbt.org/services/support-services/domestic-violence/>

Always call **999** if you or someone else is in immediate danger or a crime is in progress.

If you are unable to speak on the phone, please follow [this guidance](#) which gives guidance for silent calls.

Call 101 for non-emergency advice from the police.

You can also find out more about your options on the West Midlands Police website at: www.west-midlands.police.uk/your-options/domestic-abuse

8. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 8.1.** All reports of domestic abuse will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Personal information will only be shared with relevant professionals when necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those involved, and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.



9. GUIDANCE NOTES

Please refer to the attached guidance notes for legal framework and responsibilities, and local/national support.

Guidance Notes

Contents:

1. Legal Framework and Responsibilities
2. Related documents and statute
3. Feedback, consultation, approval and review of this policy
4. Further Resources
 - 4.1. Local Support
 - 4.2. National Support

1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on Local Authorities and other partner agencies to protect and support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse, it also recognises for the first time that children who live in a home where Domestic Abuse takes place, are direct victims themselves and services must be put in place to protect them.

1.2. Domestic Abuse and People Living with Disabilities

People with disabilities can be abused by partners, friends and family members and paid carers. If you have a disability and are experiencing abuse, it is common for abusers to use your disabilities to control and hurt you through:

- **Physical Abuse** – deliberately ignoring your care needs, pushing you onto the floor when you are unable to get back up, hitting you when you are unable to get away or defend yourself.
- **Emotional Abuse** – saying you couldn't cope without them, saying that no one else would want you because of impairments, humiliating you because you need help to use the toilet or other basic care and failing to provide it, removing aids which help you to be independent.
- **Sexual Abuse** – women with disabilities are twice as likely to be raped or assaulted.
- **Financial Abuse** – controlling your finances, taking your money without your consent.

1.3. Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is a law that protects people from unfair treatment and helps to make sure everyone is treated equally. As such, this policy takes into account and responds to the needs of groups sharing the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Ethnicity and Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Sex

Care Experience (Birmingham City Council recognises Care Experience as a protected characteristic).

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that this policy is fair and does not disadvantage protected groups; this will be reviewed at regular intervals.

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS

There are several related documents and statutes that are used in conjunction with this policy:

- City Housing Domestic Abuse Procedure
- Birmingham City-wide Council Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 24+
- Equality Impact Assessment.
- The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024–2029
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equalities Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996

3. FEEDBACK, CONSULTATION, APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy was developed in consultation with tenant groups and Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). This policy will be formally reviewed every three years to ensure it remains relevant, effective and aligned to current legislation and best practice. We value the views of our tenants and ask for feedback about the service we provide to improve the way in which we work when dealing with Domestic Abuse.

4. FURTHER RESOURCES

4.1. Local Support

- **Birmingham's Domestic Abuse Hub** (run by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid) provides a front door for survivors, professionals, friends or family to find out more about domestic abuse, local support and how you can help. <https://bswaid.org/>
- **Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid** also provides frontline domestic abuse support services to women and children in the Birmingham and Solihull area. [Homepage - Birmingham Solihull Women's Aid](#)
- **Trident Reach** supports male and female survivors of domestic abuse. <https://tridentgroup.org.uk/care-support/domestic-abuse-services>
- **Birmingham LGBT** offer specialist support for LGBT+ domestic abuse survivors. <http://www.blgbt.org/>
- **Roshni** provides specialist support to survivors of forced marriage, so called 'honour-based' abuse and female genital mutilation. www.roshnibirmingham.org.uk
- More details of **specialist domestic abuse providers** in Birmingham can be found on the Council website. [Domestic abuse | Birmingham City Council](#)
- **GP Support** - Many GPs across Birmingham are part of the IRIS programme, working closely with Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid to help them better recognise and respond to domestic abuse. They have specialist Advocate Educators who can work directly with you to provide the right support and help with the mental and physical impacts of abuse.
- **Safety apps** [HollieGuard](#) and [Bright Sky](#) are free to download. Only download if you're sure it's safe to do so and your mobile phone is not being monitored.

4.2. National Support

There are lots of charities and other specialist support groups who offer information and support about domestic abuse. Here are some that you might find helpful:

- [Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) provided by Refuge
- Clare's Law - [Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application | West Midlands Police](#)
- [Home - Women's Aid](#)
- [Men's Advice Line | Respect](#)
- [Domestic Violence & Abuse - Emergency Injunction Service](#)
- [Home | Roshni](#) - multilingual support for black and minoritised communities affected by domestic abuse.
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)
- [Galop - the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity](#)
- [Forced marriage - GOV.UK](#)
- [About Us - Rape & Sexual Violence Project](#)

- **[Giving information | Crimestoppers](#)** is an independent charity giving people the power to speak up about crime 100% anonymously.
- **[Family Member Support](#)**. The Family Members Assistance Programme also provided by CareFirst has information and advice in relation to issues arising at home or at work for employees. This service is provided free of charge and is a confidential, independent and impartial for family members aged 18 years old and above. There is a separate phone number to use 0333 212 8699.

4.3. Worried about your behaviour?

The **[Charity to Help Domestic Abuse Perpetrators | Respect Phoneline UK](#)** is available for anyone worried about their own behaviour. Respect support those who want to change their behaviour and can also offer support to friends and family who are worried about someone's behaviour.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Survivor	A person who has been subjected to domestic abuse.
Perpetrator	A person who carries out a harmful, illegal or immoral act.
Multi-agency working	Practitioners from different agencies working together.
Civil Injunction	A Court Order to that restrains a person from committing a specific act, or in some cases, requires them to perform a particular action.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. It is a meeting attended by agencies to discuss cases of domestic abuse that practitioners consider to be 'high risk'.
Equality Impact Assessment	A structure process to ensure policies, decisions, and practices are fair and do not discriminate against any protected groups under the Equality Act 2010.

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