

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Prepared by	Head of Housing Neighbourhood and Estates Manager Neighbourhood Team Leader Policy Officer
Approved by	Customer Services Committee
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Monitoring, Auditing and Reporting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quarterly Safeguarding Monitoring Meetings 2. Lessons Learned Review Meetings

1. Scope and Aims

- 1.1. This policy addresses Hexagon Housing Association's (Hexagon's) position on domestic abuse, which can happen to anyone, and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- 1.2. Hexagon does not tolerate domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). This policy outlines our victim-centred approach, which ensures that we create a culture where residents who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse feel supported when making a report.
- 1.3. We will work collaboratively with external partners when managing cases of domestic abuse and VAWG.
- 1.4. This policy applies to all Hexagon residents, including tenants, household members, Leaseholders and Shared Owners.
- 1.5. This policy will be followed by all Hexagon staff, co-ops, contractors, and agents working for Hexagon.
- 1.6. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Procedure, Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, Antisocial Behaviour Policy, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy, where necessary.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Domestic Abuse is any incident, or pattern of incidents, of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by the partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer (Women's Aid 2024).
- 2.2. Domestic abuse includes physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional or other abuse (Domestic Abuse Act 2021)
- 2.3. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. Statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women.
- 2.4. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is any form of violence disproportionately perpetrated by men against women and girls. It is deeply linked to women's inequality and includes sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called 'honour-based' abuse, exploitation and abuse of women and girls in online spaces, trafficking and sexual exploitation, including through the sex industry;

sexual harassment in work and public life. (Women's Aid 2024 and End Violence Against Women 2022).

3. Responding to a Report

- 3.1. All reports of domestic abuse and VAWG received are responded to as a priority, within 24 hours. This includes reports from colleagues, contractors, agencies and partners, both internal and external, as well as residents.
- 3.2. We will offer a range of methods to raise reports including telephone, email, letter, in person or via a representative. We will investigate all reports of abuse that we receive, including those made in confidence, and those made by individuals not directly involved such as neighbours and contractors.
- 3.3. People experiencing abuse will be able to speak to a member of staff of the same sex and, where possible, of the same ethnic origin if requested. Where necessary, we will arrange interpreting and translation services.
- 3.4. We will obtain support for witnesses throughout an investigation.
- 3.5. An Initial Safety Plan will be completed by Hexagon within 24 hours of a receiving a report.
- 3.6. We will agree an action plan, including a safe method and frequency of contact, with the person experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG within 36 hours of the initial report.
- 3.7. We will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence risk assessment (DASH).
- 3.8. We will complete a Safeguarding Referral if there are children within the home or an adult with care and support needs.
- 3.9. Where a resident is assessed to be at high risk of serious harm or homicide, we will refer their case to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- 3.10. The safety plan and DASH risk Assessment will be reviewed after each new incident is reported or the circumstances of the person experiencing domestic abuse, perpetrator, or any member of the household, change.
- 3.11. People experiencing abuse will be able to meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue.
- 3.12. Referrals will be made to our financial inclusion team or external financial inclusion partners for any required support relating to financial issues, including options available if economic abuse is perpetrated through the rent.

3.13. We will signpost anyone living in the household who feels that they are impacted by domestic abuse to external support. The lead officer will complete any necessary referrals for internal (i.e. Money Support, Housing Sustainment, repairs) and external support. If it is safe to do so, an information leaflet will be sent giving details of agencies and resources available to people experiencing abuse.

4. Actions against perpetrators

4.1. We will take appropriate enforcement action (where evidence is available) against anyone responsible for domestic abuse and VAWG. This will only be done in cases where we can do so without compromising the safety of the person reporting the abuse. We will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken.

5. Housing options

5.1. If appropriate, we will encourage residents to seek independent advice on excluding an abusive partner/household member from the home and transferring a sole or joint tenancy to their name. We will explain that these are not steps that can be taken without legal intervention.

5.2. As part of the Housing Moves Scheme we will work with local authorities and other registered housing providers to assist with re-housing tenants experiencing domestic abuse where they meet the criteria for a Band A Priority Move.

5.3. Where emergency temporary accommodation is needed, we will support the person experiencing abuse to approach the Homeless Person's Unit of their choice. This can also involve referral to refuges via the National Domestic Violence Helpline. This includes tenants and Leaseholders.

6. Working in partnership

6.1. We will work with our partners to identify and support individuals experiencing domestic abuse and, where appropriate, take action against perpetrators, where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing domestic abuse.

6.2. Consideration will be given to arranging, with the agreement of the individual experiencing domestic abuse, multi-agency meetings to ensure support is received from all relevant agencies where the DASH Risk Identification Checklist does not meet the local authority threshold for a MARAC referral.

6.3. If required, we will work with partner agencies to provide improved security to a resident's home.

6.4. We will signpost the individual experiencing domestic abuse to relevant organisations such as Refuge or other domestic abuse agencies within their borough to provide support as appropriate.

6.5. We will advise people experiencing domestic abuse of external agencies that can offer further advice and support dependent upon their needs. We will work with our partners to ensure co-ordinated services to prioritise the safety of the person who is experiencing domestic abuse and the safety of their children, where present.

7. Information and training

7.1. We will ensure that our officers receive awareness training on domestic abuse and will make informational materials on domestic abuse and VAWG readily available.

8. Confidentiality

8.1. Confidentiality will be respected when dealing with a case of domestic abuse or VAWG.

8.2. All domestic abuse cases will be managed via our Antisocial Behaviour Management System. Access to the information disclosed that goes onto this system will be limited to investigating and senior officers only.

9. Data Protection

9.1. This Policy will be enacted in line with our Data Protection framework, and in line with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

9.2. We will share information between agencies where the assessment against the DASH Risk Identification Checklist meets the local authority threshold for MARAC referrals. This information will only be shared with those agencies attending the meeting.

9.3. We will report incidents to the police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so (with their permission), where they feel too intimidated to report incidents themselves.

9.4. If you want more information about how your personal data is processed under this policy, please contact our data protection team at dprotection@hexagon.org.uk or call our office.

10. Equality and Diversity

- 10.1. Hexagon aims to understand the diverse needs of residents and deliver fair and equitable outcomes under this policy. We commit to considering reasonable adjustments in the delivery of our services to accommodate the diverse needs of residents and their household members.
- 10.2. An equality and diversity impact assessment has been carried out and is attached as an appendix to this Policy.
- 10.3. This Policy will be enacted in line with our Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments Policy and in compliance with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Regulations.

11. Resident Consultation

- 11.1. This policy is on the programme for resident consultation in the Financial Year 2025/2025.

12. Legal Framework

- 12.1. The Family Law Act 1996
- 12.2. Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- 12.3. Human Rights Act 1998
- 12.4. Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- 12.5. Sexual Offences Act 2003
- 12.6. FGM Act 2003
- 12.7. Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- 12.8. Children Act 1989 and 2004
- 12.9. Equality Act 2010
- 12.10. Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- 12.11. Care Act 2014
- 12.12. Serious Crime Act 2015
- 12.13. Modern Slavery Act 2015
- 12.14. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- 12.15. Children and Social Work Act 2017

12.16. Data Protection Act 2018

12.17. Domestic Abuse Act 2021

13. Related Hexagon policies

13.1. Safeguarding Policy

13.2. Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

13.3. Harassment and Hate Crime Policy

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

This assessment is completed in compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Housing Regulator's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard, and Hexagon's Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments Policy. Hexagon's Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments Policy commits the organisation to understanding the diverse needs of residents and, where there are any barriers to accessing the service or any disproportionate negative impact, considering reasonable adjustments to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for all residents.

Hexagon recognises that responding and reacting to the changing needs of residents requires a willingness to do things differently and find individual solutions to ensure equitable access to our services for all. The following table will propose how we will adjust the service to account for possible requirements of different groups, to help us to prepare for these expected needs. However, we recognise that we cannot anticipate every need and that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to all needs, so we will continue to be responsive and flexible in adapting to the diverse needs of residents in enacting this policy.

Characteristic	Impact	Explanation of Impact	Reasonable Adjustments Considered	Consideration of effectiveness, practicality, cost/availability of resources and any disruption to service	Decision on whether to implement the Reasonable Adjustment
Age	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs			
Pregnancy/ Maternity	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding children and supporting women, including pregnant women			
Disability: Physical health and mobility	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding adults with care and support needs. Physical health and mobility will be taken into account when assessing risk, action plans, and methods of communication.			

Disability: Learning and neurodiversity	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding adults with care and support needs. Learning disabilities and neurodivergence will be taken into account when assessing risk, action plans, and methods of communication.			
Disability: Vision and hearing	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding adults with care and support needs. Vision and hearing disabilities will be taken into account when assessing risk, action plans, and methods of communication.			
Disability: Mental health	Positive	This policy commits to safeguarding adults with care and support needs. Vision and hearing disabilities will be taken into account when assessing risk, action plans, and methods of communication.			
Sex	Positive	This policy commits to supporting people of any gender/sex who experience domestic abuse. This policy does not tolerate violence against women and girls.	People experiencing abuse will be able to speak to a member of staff of the same sex. Signposting and referrals to external support agencies will, where relevant, be tailored to the person's sex. (i.e. Women's Aid; Respect Men's Advice Line).	Dependent on availability of staff	Agreed

Gender reassignment / Transgender / Non-binary identity	Positive	This policy commits to supporting people of any gender/sex who experience domestic abuse. This policy does not tolerate violence against women and girls, this includes violence against trans-women.	Signposting and referrals to LGBT+ support services for tailored support (i.e. Galop)		Agreed
Race or nationality	Positive	This policy commits to supporting people of any race or nationality who are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG.	Where possible, people experiencing abuse will be able to speak to a member of staff of the same ethnic origin if requested.	Dependent on availability of staff	Agreed
Religion or belief	Positive	This policy commits to supporting people of all religions and beliefs who are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG.	Where possible, people experiencing abuse will be able to speak to a member of staff of the same religion or belief if requested.	Dependent on availability of staff	Agreed
Sexual orientation	Positive	This policy commits to supporting people of any sexual orientation who are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG.	Signposting and referrals to LGBT+ support services for tailored support (i.e. Switchboard)		Agreed
Language	Positive	This policy commits to providing interpreting and translation services.			
Literacy	Positive	This policy commits to agreeing the best method of communication with the resident, working with a representative of the resident, and completing signposting or referrals to any additional support needed.			

Outcome

Where any negative impact is identified, have changes to the policy or sufficient reasonable adjustments been proposed to mitigate the impact?	
No negative impact identified	
How will the reasonable adjustments be facilitated and communicated to residents?	
This information will be available publicly on our website, and residents will be informed when we are agreeing an action plan and method and frequency of communication of the possibility of requesting reasonable adjustments.	
What are the arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the impact on residents, the diverse needs of residents using the service, and the implementation of reasonable adjustments?	
Equality impact assessment completed in departmental annual review. Reasonable adjustments are recorded on our system and subject to regular review.	
Are you satisfied that we have met our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Consumer Regulations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Name and Job Role:	Niamh Mannion, Policy Officer