

Hexagon

**Domestic Abuse (and
Violence Against Women
and Girls) Policy**

POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 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 when residents who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse feel supported when making a report.
- 1.2 We recognise the importance of supporting residents whilst also ensuring that any action we take is done with their consent.
- 1.3 We will work collaboratively with external partners when managing cases of domestic abuse.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all residents, all staff, co-ops, board members and contractors, sub-contractors and agents working for Hexagon.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Procedure, Safeguarding policy and procedure, Antisocial Behaviour policy, Harassment policy and Hate Crime policy.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Domestic Abuse is “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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”. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse (Home Office 2013).
- 2.2 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) refers to crimes which disproportionately are experienced by women and girls. This includes domestic violence abuse, sexual offences, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, honour based violence/abuse, trafficking and prostitution.

3. Responding to a report

- 3.1 We will respond to reports received from partners such as the police and to reports made by residents.
- 3.2 Residents can make a report in different ways. We will investigate all reports of domestic abuse that we receive, including those made in confidence, and those made by individuals not directly involved such as neighbours and contractors.
- 3.3 We will provide interpreting and translation services for residents if required and provide or obtain support for witnesses throughout an investigation.
- 3.4 Safety planning will be carried out to provide support for the person experiencing domestic abuse and their children where present, unless another organisation has carried this out. We will carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist (DASH).
- 3.5 If appropriate, we will encourage victims to seek legal advice to transfer a tenancy to the victim/ transfer a tenancy to their name.
- 3.6 Referrals will be made to our financial inclusion team or external financial inclusion partners for any required support relating to financial issues.
- 3.7 We will agree an action plan (recorded on React or a replacement system) with the person experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them.
- 3.8 We will offer support to anyone living in the household who feels that they are a victim.

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 victim. We will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken.

5. Housing options

- 5.1 As part of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal we will work with local authorities and other registered housing providers to assist with housing victims.
- 5.2 We will refer victims to the local authorities' homeless person's service in cases where emergency temporary accommodation is required. This can also include referrals to refuges via the National Domestic Violence Helpline.
- 5.3 Victims of domestic abuse will be given priority banding on our transfer register.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1 Confidentiality will be respected when dealing with a case of domestic abuse or VAWG. 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The option of opting for a staff member of the same gender to deal with their case will be provided.
- 6.4 We will ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse 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 individual wishes us to use to stay in contact with them.
- 6.5 Information re domestic abuse cases will be stored on a secure, password protected (need-to-know) system.

7. Working in partnership

- 7.1 We will work with our partners to identify and support individuals experiencing domestic abuse and, where appropriate, to take action against perpetrators, where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing domestic abuse.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 If required, we will work with partner agencies to provide improved security to a resident's home.
- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 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.

8. Information and training

- 8.1 We will ensure that our officers receive specialist training on domestic abuse and will make informational materials on domestic abuse and VAWG readily available.

9. Equalities

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment 'initial screening' was conducted and found that the policy can have a positive impact on all protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.2 We will work with all individuals who make a report, irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other characteristics identified in the Equality Act.

10. Legislation

- 10.1 The following legislation is relevant to this policy:
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - The Family Law Act 1996
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - The Housing Act 1996
 - The Equality Act 2010

11. Appendix – organisation contact details

Helplines

National Domestic Violence Helpline: This helpline is run in partnership by Refuge and Women's Aid and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Freephone telephone 0808 2000 247

Childline: For information and advice for children and young people, please visit the Childline website www.childline.org.uk or telephone Childline free on 0800 11 11.

Victim Support: Provides follow-up support and advice people experiencing domestic abuse. Please visit the website – www.victimsupport.org.uk or telephone 08 08 16 89 111. For texttalk 18001 08 08 16 89 111

Ascent Project (London Violence against women and girls): Delivers a range of services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Website: <https://www.wrc.org.uk/ascent> Telephone: 020 7697 3461

GaLop): for LGBT+ community, Galop can be contacted via email: help@galop.org.uk National LGBT+ domestic violence helpline is 0800 999 5428

Broken Rainbow National Helpline – LGBT: Provides services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people who are experiencing domestic abuse. Website: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk Telephone: 0300 999 5428

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard: provides a range of services for the LGBT community. Website: <https://switchboard.lgbt/about-us/> Phone: 0300 330 0630 (10am to 10pm every day of the year). Email: chris@switchboard.lgbt

Forced Marriage Unit: Provides help and advice for people who are worried they may be forced into marriage and for people who are worried about friends or relatives. Website: www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage . Telephone 020 7008 0151 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday), Out of hours 020 7008 11500(ask for the Global Response Centre)

Respect Men's Advice Line: For support for men experiencing domestic abuse, Website: www.mensadvice.org.uk . Telephone 0808 801 0327

Respect – For people who are worried about their own abusive behaviour or for professionals or others looking for help for an abuser. Website: <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/> Telephone 0808 802 4040,

National Centre for Domestic Violence: Provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic abuse regardless of their financial circumstances. Website: www.ncdv.org.uk Freephone telephone: 0800 970 2070, Text:NCDV to 6077, Email:office@ncdv.org.uk.

Other useful websites

Women's Aid: for women who experience domestic abuse. Website: www.womensaid.org.uk

Refuge: The national charity for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Website: <https://www.refuge.org.uk/>

Galop: Anti-LGBT hate crime charity. Website: www.galop.org.uk

CAADA: Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Website: www.caada.org.uk

Rights of women: Legal advice for women experiencing domestic abuse: Website: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

AVA: AVA provides a range of services to organisations and agencies working in the voluntary and statutory sector as well as to individual practitioners. There is information on the website for friends and family worried about someone who is experiencing domestic abuse. Website: www.avaproject.org.uk

Dogs Trust: The Dogs Trust, Freedom Project is a free foster care service for dogs belonging to families fleeing from domestic abuse. The service operates in Greater London, Hertfordshire and Yorkshire. Website: <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/>

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Approved by: Directors' Group

Approved date: January 2021

Date of last review: December 2018

Document Owner: Neighbourhood Service Manager

Date of Next Review: January 2023

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