



DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

February 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

CHA has signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance - Make a Stand Pledge. We have pledged to make four focussed commitments to provide support for people experiencing domestic abuse.

1. Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
2. Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on our website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
3. Put in place a HR Policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
4. Appoint a champion at a senior level in Castlehill to own the activities we are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out how Castlehill Housing Association (The Association) views domestic abuse, and how we will respond and seek to deal with any reports of such abuse affecting tenants or members of their households. The term 'abuse' covers violence as well as verbal or other forms of abuse.

- 2.1 The Association recognises that domestic abuse presents one of the highest risks to personal safety and homelessness presentations. CHA will therefore take the strongest actions possible against perpetrators of domestic abuse where it has the power to do so and with the consent of the victim.
- 2.2 The Association will provide a sensitive and supportive response to all reports of domestic abuse and respond to them within 1 working day. We will assist the victim to reach a decision which they feel best secures their safety by: eg reviewing their accommodation, supporting them to explore their options, enabling the level of assistance they want, supporting them to access specialist or emergency services.

3. DEFINITION

The Association will use the Scottish Government definition of domestic abuse, which is:

Domestic Abuse, as gendered based violence, can be perpetrated by partners or ex partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, with-holding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends. It can be characterised by a pattern of coercive control often escalating in frequency and severity over time.

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 pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim.

Domestic violence and abuse can manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members via unlawful activities, such as forced marriage, 'honour-based abuse' and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of abuse. Any such actions are not acceptable, whatever form they take.

4. AIM OF THE POLICY

By adopting this policy CHA aims to:

- improve overall safety and wellbeing by recognising that domestic abuse is a serious crime which has an adverse impact on the health of individuals, families and communities.
- increase awareness and understanding of this issue amongst residents and employees.
- encourage residents and employees to report domestic abuse.
- facilitate early identification of domestic abuse and offer supportive and effective intervention to reduce the risk of harm.
- improve the safety and welfare of adults and children affected by domestic abuse and prevent further incidents by responding rapidly, effectively and consistently to all reports.
- empower victims by providing information on the options available to them.
improve the response to victims through effective engagement of appropriate external enforcement and support agencies.
- create a consistent approach for recording and monitoring incidents of domestic abuse.
- Provide colleagues with training and inform colleagues of best practice when responding to domestic abuse.
- ensure that all sections are clear regarding their roles in tackling and responding to issues around domestic abuse.

5. EQUALITIES STATEMENT

The following overarching aims support CHA's commitment to ensure E&D is embraced:

- Service provision - accessible services and homes are provided to all
- Communication – a range of communication methods, appropriate to the needs of a diverse society
- Employment - a diverse, talented and motivated Management Committee and workforce that understand and reflect the needs of the communities served

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The Association encourages all tenants and household members to report domestic abuse, whether they are victims, or witnesses. We will deal with all reports of domestic abuse with sensitivity.
- 6.2 The Association will take the approach in dealing with domestic abuse that if a person feels they are experiencing domestic abuse we will deal with it under this policy.
- 6.3 The Association will deal with all reports in a non-judgemental manner and in confidence. We will not require victims to take legal action or to contact the Police before we provide assistance.
- 6.4 The Association will only act with the victim's consent. With the exception where we consider a child or adult is at serious risk of harm or injury. Any interaction with a person who is identified as the victim of domestic abuse should be guided by best practice guidelines.
- 6.5 The Association will not pursue recharges against a current tenant where there is supporting evidence that damage was caused by the perpetrator.
- 6.6 The Association will offer housing support to current tenants through the Key Project to explore options available.
- 6.7 The Association will prioritise resettlement housing support to incoming tenants being rehoused due to domestic abuse via the Key Project.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 7.1 Victims will be encouraged to allow the Association to share information with other agencies including the police and local authority departments, to ensure the full range of actions can be pursued and appropriate assistance provided.
- 7.2 The Association recognises a individual right that information about them will be kept confidential. Except in certain circumstances where there is an identified risk of harm to self or others including children.

Appendices

Training:

<https://www.daart.scot/#/> online training tool for staff.

Information:

<https://daart.scot/Directory/#/> directory of domestic abuse services – providing links to local and national agencies

Other related policies and documents

Allocations Policy

Management Transfer Policy

Equalities and Diversity Policy

Voids Policy