

Melville Housing Association



Policy : Domestic Abuse

Subject:	Domestic Abuse
Section:	Housing Services
Objective:	To respond swiftly and appropriately to all reported incidents of domestic abuse.
Scottish Social Housing Charter	Outcome 7,8, 9 Housing Options
Legislation:	Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
Issue Date:	September 2020
Review Date:	September 2023
Policy Ref No:	HSG 008

1.0 Policy

1.1 Domestic abuse can be defined as threatened or actual abuse carried out by a member of a household against another member of the same household. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Coercive control (pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use of threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and /or emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Harassment
- Stalking

1.2 We will take a supportive, non-judgemental and positive approach to all persons who approach us for help and advice on domestic abuse. We will treat complaints seriously, sensitively and in confidence. We will not ask for evidence of violence or abuse but if the victim offers any information or documents which could help with investigating the complaint, then we will accept these.

1.3 We will deal with domestic abuse by:

- Supporting and offering appropriate advice and assistance to the victim
- Working in partnership with the police, social work, Women's Aid and other organisations as appropriate.
- Making sure that the confidentiality of both the victim and perpetrator is respected
- Taking the strongest action possible against perpetrators of domestic abuse where we can and with consent of the victim.

1.4 We will support victims of domestic abuse by:

- Encouraging them to seek help from specialist counselling and support agencies and where necessary, legal representation
- Making sure that their home has appropriate security precautions, such as adequate door and window locks
- Treating any repairs required to make safe the property as emergency repairs. These will not be recharged to the victim.
- If they wish to move from their home or are not a Melville tenant, assisting them to obtain temporary housing or alternative suitable, permanent accommodation as appropriate.
- If they wish to remain in their home and they have a joint tenancy with the perpetrator, considering offering the perpetrator alternative accommodation to remove them from the marital home quickly.

2.0 Scope of policy

2.1 Our policy applies to all of our tenants, their partners and other members of the household.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 When we receive a complaint of domestic abuse our first priority will be to make sure that the victim has somewhere safe to stay for the night. If

the victim decides to stay in the home, then we will repair any damage relating to the security of the property as an emergency. The victim will not be charged for these repairs.

- 3.2 We will carry out an assessment interview immediately, but if this is not possible we will arrange it within 2 working days of the first contact. We will give victims the choice of being interviewed by someone of the same sex, wherever possible. If there is hearing or language difficulties, then we will arrange for an interpreter to be present.
- 3.3 We will help and support the victim in any practicable way. If a victim expresses the wish to move, temporarily or permanently, then we will assist them to obtain alternative accommodation; any offer of alternative accommodation by us will be in line with our Allocations policy where domestic abuse victims are awarded maximum points.
- 3.4 We will not take any action without the express consent and support of the victim.
- 3.5 As domestic abuse is a form of harassment, we will consider taking legal action for a breach of tenancy conditions against any alleged perpetrator who is a tenant of ours.
- 3.6 We will support any action taken by the victim, the police or other agencies against perpetrators of domestic abuse who are tenants of ours.
- 3.7 We are not able to take legal action against perpetrators of domestic abuse who are not tenants of ours, but will support, wherever possible, any action taken against these perpetrators by the victim, police or other agencies.
- 3.8 We will keep victims informed at each stage of our investigation into their domestic abuse complaint. We will also advise victims of action taken by us, in particular, the dates and outcomes of any court hearings.

4.0 Complaints & Appeals

- 4.1 If a victim is unhappy with the way we deal with their complaint of domestic abuse they should contact the Housing Services Team who will investigate their complaint in line with our Complaints Policy

5.0 Equality & Diversity

- 5.1 We are committed to Equality and Diversity and will not discriminate in the operation of this policy on the basis of age, gender, gender reassignment, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, marital status, family circumstances, political belief or affiliation, sexual orientation, medical condition or disability or Trade Union Membership. We aim to promote equal opportunities and comply with all current legal requirements relating to equal opportunities.

6.0 Training

All appropriate staff, particularly the housing services team will receive training to ensure this policy is applied appropriately.

7.0 Tenancy Sustainment

- 7.1 We are committed to assisting tenants, where possible, to remain in their homes. We recognise the individual needs of tenants and take these into account in all aspects of our service. Where we are unable to offer direct assistance, we will signpost tenants to other agencies and services. We have a partnership agreement with CHAI (Community Help and Advice Initiative) to provide Tenancy Support and Money Advice services.

8.0 Data Protection

- 8.1 Melville Housing Association takes the issues of data security and data protection very seriously and strictly adhere to guidelines published in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) , together with any domestic laws subsequently enacted.

Information on how we manage our duties is detailed in our Privacy Policy. Details on how we use personal information can be found in our GDPR Fair Processing Notice. Further information is available on our website, www.melville.org.uk or on request from the Association's Office.

9.0 Policy Review

- 9.1 The Chief Operating Officer will ensure this policy is reviewed every three years or earlier if there are any changes to legislation. The Senior Management Team have delegated authority to approve minor changes to this policy. Significant changes will be submitted to the Board for approval.