

Domestic Abuse Policy

Summary

Domestic Abuse is a serious crime that often takes place in the home. It impacts on the safety of individuals, households, and communities.

We take reports of domestic abuse or sexual violence seriously and believe everyone should feel safe in their home and local community regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership or any other protected characteristics.

Portsmouth Homes are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all residents. We recognise the serious impact that domestic abuse can have on individuals, families and communities, and we will take all necessary steps to respond appropriately. Our role includes not only addressing incidents of abuse but also to actively support those affected by ensuring they are signposted and connected to the most appropriate support services. We will work closely with specialist agencies, community partners, and relevant organisations to provide practical assistance, safeguarding, and pathways to safety.

Effective date

22 February 2024

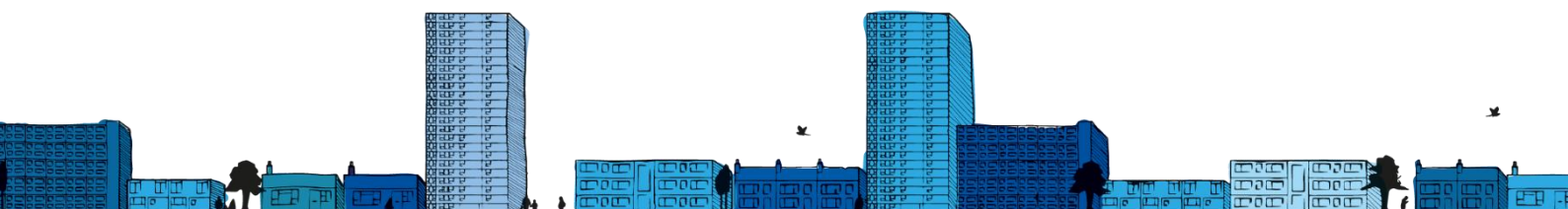
Review

Latest Review Date: 10 December 2025

We will review this Policy every 3 years or when there has been an update to legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational changes.

Version

Version 1.1



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Scope

This policy applies to all reports of domestic abuse (DA) that:

- involve tenants or members of their household

Any reference in this policy to 'we', 'our' or 'us' refers to, Portsmouth Homes.

Any reference in this policy to 'tenant', 'customer' or 'resident' refers to a Portsmouth Homes secure tenant, leaseholder or shared owner.



Purpose

Domestic abuse is a serious crime that often takes place in the home. It impacts on the safety of individuals, households, and communities. We want all our residents to feel safe in their homes and local community.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Improve the safety of our residents affected by domestic abuse.
- Support and empower victims / survivors to report any concerns or incidents of abuse and engage with us to support reducing risk of further incidents by encouraging early reporting and a rapid response.

We will:

- Provide residents with appropriate confidential support, guidance, and referrals to other specialist agencies where appropriate and providing wellbeing support and advice, in line with our regulatory and legal requirements.
- Support tenants to sustain tenancies and feel safe in their home
- Work in partnership with specialist agencies and local services, where appropriate, to ensure a multi-agency approach for those affected by domestic abuse.
- Take action against people using abusive behaviours, in accordance with our tenancy agreement and responsibilities as a social housing provider

Definitions

The legal definition of domestic abuse, as stated in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is:

The behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- The behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

“Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to

- Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or



- Obtain goods or services.

For the purposes of this Part A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

A child who sees or hears or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator, is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse.

'Personally connected' means that the two people are:

- they are, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- they have agreed to marry one another or have entered into a civil partnership agreement (even if it didn't go ahead)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they are or have been parents or guardians to the same child
- they are relatives

Victim and survivor – these terms are used to describe people directly affected by domestic abuse, including those who have witnessed it. We will follow the lead of the person seeking support, since the journey of the victim to survivor is unique to each person.

Domestic abuse can also occur through the actions of immediate and extended family members through unlawful acts including, but not limited to:

- Forced marriage
- Honour-based abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM).

The full legal definition can be found [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

What you can expect from us

We recognise that access to safe accommodation plays an important part in reducing the risk to victims / survivors and their families, but housing is not the solution on its own. We are part of a framework of specialist agencies working in partnership and using their individual specialist knowledge, advice and support powers to help keep you safe and prevent domestic abuse.

Whilst we encourage all victims / survivors of domestic abuse to report incidents to the Police, we will provide appropriate support and will be led by the victim / survivor even if you don't want to involve the Police.

There is an important distinction to be made between risk identification and risk assessment. While risk identification involves knowledge and use of tools such as the DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking & Harassment Risk Checklist) to identify visible risk factors, risk assessment requires more in-depth knowledge and is an on-going, sustained process.

We will use the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment [DASH](#) and the Domestic Abuse Referral Pathway to assess each individual victim / survivor's specific support needs. This will also help in determining any appropriate actions, based on



knowledge of the circumstances in each case, linking with the [Introduction to domestic abuse in portsmouth \(saferportsmouth.org.uk\)](https://saferportsmouth.org.uk)

The DASH is an evidence-based tool designed to support risk identification and inform professional judgment for risk assessment. When completed, it becomes an active record that can be referred to in the future for case management and risk assessment. Risk can change at any time and so it is essential to review the risks with the victim/survivor when anything changes in their circumstances or that of their perpetrator the person using abusive behaviours, or following any further incidence of abuse (including coercive control).

- High Risk – DASH score 14+ or professional judgment
- Medium Risk - DASH score 10 - 13
- Standard Risk - DASH score 0-9

If a victim/survivor is it is assessed as high risk, we have a duty to refer to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARAC is a meeting of representatives from various agencies, such as police, domestic abuse services, housing, children and adult services, and health. The primary goal of MARAC is to create a coordinated safety plan to reduce the risk of serious harm to adults and children, as well as holding the person using abusive behaviours to account. Consent is not required for a MARAC referral, as the primary focus is on protecting victims and children affected by domestic abuse, especially when there is a risk of increased harm. Instead, victims/survivors are informed about the referral and offered support from a domestic abuse service (In Portsmouth: Stop Domestic Abuse). If the victim/survivor declines domestic abuse support, they will be offered 'post-MARAC' contact to discuss any actions that have been set within the multiagency meeting. and do not need the victim / survivor's consent.

We will assess the circumstance and take appropriate action in domestic abuse situations. This is to help keep tenants safe and may include victim / survivor contact and keeping you informed, case management, additional security requests, tenancy changes and alternative accommodation requests, if required and within our ability as your landlord. We will seek your consent before we take any action ***unless there is a safeguarding concern and there may be a need to share the information with other specialist agencies.***

If you feel more comfortable, you can contact [Stop Domestic Abuse](#) directly to receive support and advice.

We can offer advice, refer you to specialist agencies, and help make your home secure where appropriate so that you can stay safe.

We are aware of the impact on children and young people who witness, hear or experience the effect of domestic abuse of witnessing and growing up in a family affected by domestic abuse. Within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. We realise that young people themselves can be victims of domestic abuse. We will refer to our Safeguarding policy and work with specialist agencies to help keep children and young people safe.

If you are reporting domestic abuse on behalf of someone and wish for your details to remain confidential, these would not be disclosed.



If you don't feel safe in your home

Domestic Abuse can be reported to the Housing Office by a resident, third parties or by a member of staff observing or experiencing it.

In situations where someone or a property is in danger, a serious disruption to the public is likely or when a crime is taking place, the police should be called on 999 before contacting us or call 101 for non-emergency enquiries.

We will look at security measures to allow the victim / survivors to remain in their homes wherever possible and we will discuss the tenancy options. We will make repairs where needed and will not usually charge tenants where the need for these repairs has been caused by the person using abusive behaviours.

Emergency Housing & Refuge

Anyone who has left home following domestic abuse are treated as homeless. If they apply out of office hours then their immediate, "overnight" problem may be resolved using B&B or a guest room in a sheltered housing scheme that evening, via the Out of Hours service on 02392 824244.

The following day, contact will need to be made to Housing Needs and Advice to seek support and advice on the next steps beyond the emergency "overnight" problem, in line with the Accommodation Policy.

Emergency housing may be a hostel, this can provide space for the victim / survivor, an opportunity to contact other specialist agencies and allows time for long term housing needs to be assessed, in line with the Allocations Policy.

What action do we take to prevent domestic abuse?

Portsmouth Homes is guided by the duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and our responsibilities as housing, community safety and safeguarding providers.

We will:

- Raise Awareness
- Offer emergency and temporary accommodation for victims/survivors and/or their children fleeing domestic abuse
- Supporting tenants to adapt their homes with extra security measures
- Encourage early reporting so abuse can be addressed, to reduce possible escalation of risk or harm
- We will ensure our employees receive appropriate support and training on domestic abuse.
- Offering confidential advice and referrals to specialise domestic abuse services



- Working in partnership with agencies to ensure victims/survivors and their children receive multi-agency support
- We make new tenants aware of key policies and the implications of joint tenancies.

Your voice

We will respect the experiences of victims / survivors and use their feedback to improve and shape our services

We will be sensitive to the situation of the victim / survivor and recognise that asking for feedback may not always be appropriate or safe.

We provide tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to engage, influence and scrutinise the Landlord Strategies, policies and services.

If you would like to be included in future resident engagement focus groups and would like to know how to get involved, please contact us for more information:

You can contact our team by:

- Email: housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Phone: 02392 834835
- Website: visit the [Resident engagement and community resources on our website](#)

What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

We completed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This Policy should have direct and positive equality and diversity impacts.

Support

Stop Domestic Abuse:

Supporting those affected by domestic abuse in Hampshire, Portsmouth & Southampton, including victims/survivors, children & young people and those using abusive behaviours.

[Stop Domestic Abuse](#)

For advice for those affected by domestic abuse or for professionals seeking guidance, you can call 0330 0533 630

The Single Point of Contact line is open from 9am-9pm Monday - Friday & 10am-6pm on Weekends and Bank Holidays for confidential advice and support.

Emergency refuge support and advice is available 24/7 by calling 0330 0533 630



Support that is offered through Stop Domestic Abuse:

- 1:1 practical domestic abuse and safety planning/risk management support
- Refuge
- Groupwork
- Children & Young Peoples (CYP) support
- Harmful Cultural Practices
- LGBTQ+ Advocacy
- Stalking Advocacy & Support
- Behaviour Change

Women's Aid:

Provides a range of vital services and support for victims/survivors of domestic abuse, including frontline services, for example refuge, and support for those who are experiencing domestic abuse. As well as campaigning for policy changes and raising public awareness.

Housing Needs & Advice:

Can support with homelessness applications, if victims/survivors and/or their children need to flee their home due to domestic abuse and their safety. Victims/survivors can also call the police if they feel they are at immediate risk and need immediate support. The Housing Needs & Advice Service can support with providing information, guidance and support surrounding housing options for those who are affected by domestic abuse.

ManKind:

A confidential helpline available for male victims of domestic abuse across the UK, as well as their friends and family. ManKind provides information and signposting services to men experiencing and impacted by domestic abuse from their current or former partner.

Freephone 0808 800 1170 (will not show on your bills)

Helpline 01823 334244 (for those with inclusive minutes)

Men's Aid:

Free practical advice and support to men who have been abused or are in an abusive relationship. Someone to talk to in the strictest of confidence. Helpful, constructive advice, plus other useful contacts specific to you – 0333 567 0556

Find out more about domestic abuse on the Safer Portsmouth website [Domestic Abuse - Safer Portsmouth](#) and [Domestic and sexual abuse - Portsmouth City Council HIVE Portsmouth](#)

Regulation and legislation

We recognise the variety of legislation, and we will continue to monitor relevant legal guidance. The list below reflects some of the existing legal framework and relevant publications:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021



- Family Law Act 1996 Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act Housing Act 1996
- Domestic Abuse Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Crime and Security Act 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law 2017 - also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)
- Homelessness Reduction Act General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
- The Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Family Law Act 1996
- Civil Partnership Act 2004

Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Portsmouth Homes Landlord Policies, Strategies and Reports - [Housing policies, strategies and privacy notices](#)
- Tenancy Agreement / Leasehold Agreement

How to feedback

If you have any questions around the policy or would like to know more about its application, please contact the relevant service in the first instance.

You can get this policy in large print, braille, audio or in another language by contacting your Housing Office. More information is available [translation, interpreting and audio information](#).

Compliments

To help us provide the best service we can. We would like to hear customer views on the services that they use. If the customer is pleased with a member of staff or service, please let us know.

- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



Complaints

If a customer is unhappy, they can refer to our Landlord Complaints Policy.

- Online complaint form at [Make a housing complaint](#)
- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Housing Ombudsman Service

If a customer is unhappy, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice and guidance at any time.

- Online complaint form on [the Housing Ombudsman Service website](#)
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000
- For more information, visit [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#)

