

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

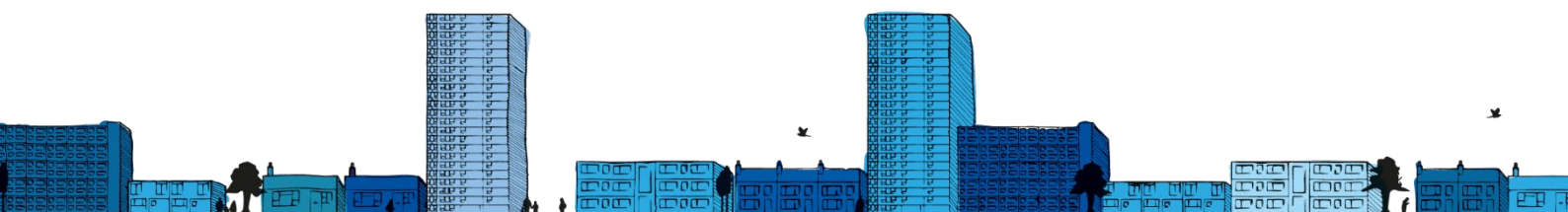
Review

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 Portsmouth Homes tenants, shared owners or leaseholders 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.

Any reference in this policy to 'victim' or 'survivor' refers to a Portsmouth Homes secure tenant, leaseholder or shared owner who has experienced domestic abuse.

We recognise that individuals may identify with either term, and we use both to reflect personal choice and respect how you may prefer to describe your experience. Where appropriate, this policy may use 'you' or 'your' to speak directly to those affected.

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 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 Act 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:

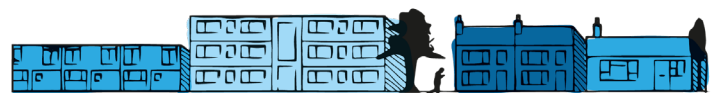
- they are, or have been, married or civil partners to each other
- they have agreed to marry one another or have entered into a civil partnership agreement (even if it didn’t go ahead)
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they are or have been parents or guardians 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. The dual term empowers individuals to self-identify in a way that feels right for them. 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

Our Commitment

We recognise that safe housing is essential in reducing risk for victims/survivors and their families. However, housing alone is not the solution. We work as part of a wider network of specialist agencies to provide coordinated support and protection.

Non-Judgemental Response

- All reports of domestic abuse are handled sensitively and without judgment.

Emergency Advice

- We advise calling 999 if in immediate danger, if safe to do so.

Access to Support Without Legal Action

- You do not need to contact the police or take legal action to receive our support.
- Any action we take is with your consent, unless there is a risk of serious harm.

Survivor-Centred Approach

- We support you to make informed decisions about your safety and housing.
- This includes reviewing accommodation, enabling chosen support levels, and taking appropriate action against the person using abusive behaviours.

Specialist Support

- We help you access internal or external domestic abuse specialists.

Inclusive Interviewing

- Where possible, we offer interviews with officers of the gender, ethnicity or cultural background you request.

Financial Support

- You are not usually charged for damage caused by the person using abusive behaviours.
- A discretionary fund is available to help rebuild lives and homes.

Person using abusive behaviours

- We take the strongest possible action against individuals committing domestic abuse, prioritising survivor and children's safety.
- We will provide general housing advice to the person using abusive behaviours when requested.



- Where the person using abusive behaviour is willing to acknowledge and change their abusive behaviour, we will refer them to the appropriate support services.
- Any support or action plan offered to the person using abusive behaviours will be centred around the voice and safety of the victim/survivor of domestic abuse

Respect for Survivor Choice

- We provide support even if you choose not to involve the police.
- If support is declined, you will be offered post-Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) contact to discuss actions taken.

Housing and Safety Measures

- We assess each case and may offer:
 - Case management and survivor contact.
 - Additional security measures.
 - Tenancy changes or alternative accommodation (where possible).
- Your consent is sought before taking action, unless safeguarding concerns require information sharing.

Children and Young People

- We recognise the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.
- Under the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#), they are recognised as victims in their own right.
- We follow our Safeguarding Policy and work with specialist agencies to protect them.

Confidentiality

- If you report domestic abuse on behalf of someone else, your details will remain confidential if requested.

Direct Access to Support

- You can contact [STOP DOMESTIC ABUSE](#) directly for advice and support.
- Contact our staff who can also support you to refer.
- Access our webpage for further support and guidance.

If you don't feel safe in your home

Domestic Abuse can be reported to staff 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.

Portsmouth Homes residents who have fled their home following domestic abuse are treated as homeless. If they apply out of office hours then their immediate," housing need 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.

You can also get support to identify available refuge vacancies through Stop Domestic Abuse. Emergency refuge support and advice is available 24/7 by calling 0330 0533 630.

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 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.

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](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [Housing Act 1996](#)
- [Domestic Violence, 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](#)
- [General Data Protection Regulation 2018](#)
- [Domestic violence disclosure scheme 'Clare's Law'](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation](#)
- [Secure Tenancies \(Victims of Domestic Abuse\) Act 2018](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [Family Law Act 1996](#)
- [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#)



- [Regulatory standards for landlords](#)
- [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)

Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [Portsmouth Homes policies, strategies and reports](#)
- 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](#)

