



Domestic Abuse Policy

Date of approval	
Responsible director	Paul Seymour, Executive Director of Customers & Communities
Policy monitoring body	CX Committee
Resident input into policy date	CX Committee November 2022
Date for policy review	30/11/2025
Linked strategies/policies	See section 12
Version/date	18/10/2022
Owner	Amanda Seals, Head of Living Well

1. Statement and Background

- 1.1 Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) endorses the right of members of our community to be treated with respect and dignity and takes a zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse. This Policy outlines our victim or survivor-centred approach, to ensure we create a culture of support for our customers who have or are experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse, to report it and feel supported.
- 1.2 WCHG is committed to contributing towards the safety, stability and sustainability of our community by treating domestic abuse as a crime which is not acceptable and is detrimental to the physical and mental wellbeing of victims or survivors, their families, and communities.
- 1.3 WCHG also recognises that not all cases of domestic abuse are reported and that there are a number of reasons for this. We will work in conjunction with other partner agencies to ensure all sections of the community feel confident in reporting issues to us, and will ensure any action we take is done so with their consent. WCHG will work with victims or survivors and act in line with their wishes, and where we have the power to do so.
- 1.4 To reflect the [Home Office Domestic Abuse Draft Statutory Guidance 2022](#) WCHG recognises that not everyone who has experienced, or is experiencing, domestic abuse chooses to describe themselves as a 'victim' and other terms may be preferred such as 'survivor'. We recognise both terms, and therefore to be consistent, all people experiencing domestic abuse are referred to in this policy as "victim or survivor".

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy sets out how WCHG works in partnership with other agencies to deal with issues of domestic abuse and applies to all WCHG customers and colleagues. WCHG also recognises that its colleagues can be the victims or survivors of domestic abuse and a separate policy responds and supports colleagues experiencing this.

3 Definition

- 3.1 WCHG adopts the Home Office definition of domestic violence and abuse which 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 trans status. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts 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 a pattern of

acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim. This is not a legal definition. The definition also includes so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.”

3.2 Examples of domestic abuse can include but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse – punching, slapping, hitting, stabbing and attempted murder.
- Verbal abuse – name calling, humiliation, degradation, accusing, verbally threatening.
- Sexual violence – using force, threats, or intimidation to make a victim or survivor perform sexual acts, rape and non-consensual acts of sex.
- Economic abuse – control of and over economic resource access, leaving the victim or survivor unable to support themselves and thereby forcing dependency on the perpetrator, e.g. preventing education or employment, preventing victims or survivors claiming benefits, controlling use of property, phone or car.
- Financial abuse – controlling money and bank accounts, running up debts in a victim or survivor’s name, allowing no say on how money is spent.
- Psychological and emotional abuse – creating isolation, checking up on people, using physical size to intimidate, humiliating, undermining behaviour and gaslighting.
- Coercive Control – tactics to enable a perpetrator to control a victim or survivor e.g., controlling daily activities, manipulation of information to professionals, isolating, constant criticism, extreme dominance, threats to expose sensitive information, jealousy, threats of suicide, familicide, homicide.
- Stalking – persistent and unwanted attention making one feel harassed or pestered e.g., following, watching, monitoring social media, internet, cyber stalking, and online threats.

3.3 In accordance with this policy, WCHG acknowledge that:

- Whilst men will sometimes be the victims or survivors of domestic abuse, in the majority of cases, men more frequently perpetrate violence against women and children.
- Violence can take place in same sex partnerships, non-binary and transgender relationships.
- Domestic abuse is perpetrated in intimate partner and family relationships e.g. elderly relatives, child on parent or parent on adult child.
- Child and adult child to parent violence and abuse is a form of domestic abuse.
- A child is recognised as a victim or survivor of domestic abuse, if the child sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse, and is related to, or falls under “parental responsibility” of, the victim or survivor and/or perpetrator of the domestic abuse.

- Due to the high prevalence of domestic abuse across society, it is inevitable that some colleagues will experience some form of domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse includes “Honour Based” violence, which is a crime or incident that has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.
- “Honour based” violence can include forced marriages, where a marriage is conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor.
- Domestic abuse occurs in all ages, and communities regardless of socioeconomic status. Some victims or survivors face additional barriers and discrimination when trying to access services such as:
 - Parents
 - People with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities;
 - People of diverse sexuality
 - People from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME)
 - Women, men, gender fluid individuals;
 - People undergoing gender transition;
 - People with insecure immigration status.
 - Neuro- diverse individuals

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 WCHG recognises the serious and widespread nature of domestic abuse and will use a flexible approach in responding to incidents of domestic abuse taking into account the varying circumstances, of victims or survivors of domestic abuse and the different courses of action available and appropriate.
- 4.2 WCHG will use the available legal remedies and work with the police and other statutory agencies to support those who are experiencing domestic abuse, and work towards achieving a satisfactory outcome for victims or survivors and their families.
- 4.3 WCHG places great emphasis on multi agency and partnership working and agrees to participate in Information Sharing Protocols with other agencies. The welfare and safety of victims or survivors and any children involved will form the basis of the action taken by WCHG and any action taken must and will have the consent of the victim or survivor.


5. Policy

- 5.1 WCHG will adopt a victim or survivor centred and informed approach, treat victims or survivors with sensitively and respect at all times.


Reports of domestic abuse can be received from a number of different sources, such as neighbours, relatives, our colleagues and partner agencies, the police, or the individual experiencing the abuse. WCHG can also receive reports from the perpetrator themselves disclosing their behaviour. WCHG treats all reports of domestic abuse seriously, sympathetically and does so in confidence. Where further information is required to establish the extent of the abuse, colleagues will investigate and respond accordingly to this, to enable our customers to live safely in their homes.

- 5.2 We will ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate services as early as possible, and will provide advice and support to make choices about what to do next by:

- Offering a wide range of measures to support victims or survivors which includes, out of hours support, victim or survivor support, CCTV cameras and target hardening.
- Providing a sanctuary room to a property, where appropriate, to protect victims or survivors and make them feel safe in their own home.
- Sign posting and referring victims or survivors to support services such as the GP based IRIS project, Wythenshawe Safespots, Women's Aid and Manchester City Council's Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service (IDVA), Independent Choices, LGBT Foundation, Saheli or Women Matta.
- Using without notice applications for injunctions to protect victims or survivors and witnesses in situations where threats of violence are made by identifiable perpetrators.
- Supporting and assisting victims or survivors where necessary when making applications for Occupation Orders and Non-molestation Orders under the Family Law Act 1996. WCHG will also consider funding such applications should the victim or survivor have no recourse to public funding.
- Fully supporting victims or survivors who wish to be re-housed away from the property and/or require temporary accommodation. We will support a move in line with Manchester City Council's Allocation Policy, where a priority award has been assessed and awarded by Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or any subsequent multi-agency arrangement that the victim or survivor as part of an overall safety plan to protect and safeguard them, any offer



will be a suitable and safe location, considering support networks and distance to the perpetrator, and safeguarding factors. Offers of suitable accommodation may be some considerable distance from the applicant's current property.

- Providing resettlement and support packages to victims or survivors forced to leave their home. This will include where appropriate white goods, furniture packages, and carpets.
 - Referring high-risk cases into and attending MARAC. WCHG will play an active part in the MARAC process and complete any actions assigned by the MARAC.
 - Attend the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) and play an active part in the DAPP process and complete any actions assigned by the DAPP.
 - Following the relevant child protection/safeguarding procedures if we believe a child is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
 - Following the relevant adult safeguarding procedures if we believe an adult is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
 - Sharing information about domestic abuse with the police and other agencies through its data exchange protocol to identify perpetrators, offer support and assistance and monitor incidents.
 - Encouraging the reporting of domestic abuse by publicising the support available to victims or survivors and the actions WCHG will take against perpetrators.
 - Supporting perpetrators who want to change their behaviour and who have demonstrated self-awareness and insight into what they have done. We will give them the opportunity to explore and change their behaviour.
 - Continuing to work with other Registered Providers, Manchester City Council and other partner agencies across the City in the "Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum" in order to share experiences and develop good practice.
 - Offering victims or survivors of domestic abuse an interview in a safe place of their choice, with a colleague of the same sex and/or the use of a Language Line interpreter where necessary.
- 

- Keeping all information confidential and only passing it on to other agencies with the permission of the victim or survivor, where required to by law or, where necessary for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring Colleagues are trained, resourced, and supported to enable them to identify and respond to acts of domestic abuse. The training will be ongoing and will consider best practice and changes in legislation.
- Raising awareness of domestic abuse amongst our management team and colleagues to create a working environment that fully supports colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Developing new types of public campaigns with our community and partners to target all those affected by domestic abuse and promote access to services.
- Ensuring customers are kept fully informed about action taken to tackle domestic abuse and publicise successful outcomes.

6. Confidentiality Issues

- 6.1 Information will only be shared with other agencies and for taking enforcement action against the perpetrator with the permission of the victim. Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding children or vulnerable adults and a crime has been committed, WCHG will provide relevant information to the appropriate agencies.
- 6.2 Domestic abuse cases are particularly sensitive and confidentiality is important. Colleagues should be aware at all times that perpetrators may try to impersonate people in authority, or from agencies to try to obtain information about the victim.
- 6.3 All information received is recorded on a secure Case Management IT system, and sensitive information is restricted to relevant colleagues.

7. Service Standards – Local Offer

- 7.1 In line with the local offer document, we will:
- Meet with victim or survivor who wish to disclose or have disclosed that they are subjected to domestic abuse within 24 hours;
 - Complete a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC) with a victim or survivor.
 - Treat all information in confidence unless agreed otherwise;
 - Use a variety of different methods to tackle domestic abuse including legal actions and preventive measures depending on what is required;
 - Offer confidential non-judgemental support and advice for victims or survivors of domestic abuse.

8. Responsibility

- 8.1 The Executive Director of Customers & Communities shall be responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

9. Consultation, Monitoring and Review


- 9.1 WCHG will consult with all the relevant key stakeholders, including customers, colleagues and key partners on all our policies to improve their effectiveness.
- 9.2 WCHG will seek feedback from customers and conduct regular monitoring and reviews of all reported cases of domestic abuse, including the numbers, progress, and outcomes.
- 9.3 The Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed every three years by Board or dependent on any legislative changes or regulatory requirements.
- 9.4 Domestic abuse cases will be reported to Board as part of the Groups Living Well Indicators.

10. Statutory and Legislative Framework

- 10.1 WCHG recognises its duty to comply with current legislation and will operate this policy in accordance with the current statutory framework.
- 10.2 Legislation relating to this policy is:
- Housing Act 1996
 - The Family Law Act 1996
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004
 - Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
 - The Care Act 2014
 - Anti-social behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

11. Equality & Diversity

- 11.1 WCHG will ensure that the Domestic Abuse Policy and procedure is accessible to all customers and colleagues and will take into account their diverse needs when considering action.

- 
- 11.2 WCHG recognises that customers of all races, ages, religions, gender, sexual orientation, literacy levels and disability should be treated equally and fairly. We will work with all individuals who make a report, irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other characteristic identified in the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.3 WCHG recognises that domestic abuse cases may be complicated by virtue of a person's individual need and that we will provide a tailored response to reports of domestic abuse accordingly.
- 11.4 WCHG will provide support to tenants who have difficulty in managing their tenancy due to mental health issues, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, special needs, or old age.
- 11.5 WCHG will also provide support to vulnerable groups BAME, young people, ex-offenders and those using drugs and/or alcohol.
- 11.6 WCHG will provide information in languages other than English, in Braille or Large Print. Our receptions and interview rooms are fitted with a hearing loop system.

12. **Associated Policies & Strategies**

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Equality & Diversity Policy
 - Allocations Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- 