



# Scrutiny Group review findings

## - Domestic Abuse

---

July 2024


# Summary

During July and August our tenant-led Scrutiny Group conducted a review of the Domestic Abuse Policy. This report details how the review was conducted, its findings and its recommendations.

## **In summary**

Several tenants in the group have lived experience of domestic abuse and the Scrutiny Group understands the importance of this service. Overall, Scrutiny Group considers the service provided by WCHG to be good. The improvements identified in this report include finding ways to seek feedback from survivors on the services provided and making the information on the website more inclusive.

Scrutiny Group is supportive of the work underway to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation would like to see evidence in March 2025 of whether this has been achieved and what has been implemented.

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the page with a gradient from orange on the left to dark blue on the right.

# The Review

# Members set out to answer the following questions

- Does WCHG have a policy for how we respond to Domestic Abuse?
- Do we co-operate with the local authority to meet its duty to provide services for victims and their children within safe accommodation?
- Is the website providing sufficient information to help people?
- What do other Housing Providers do? – benchmarking against other organisations
- What is put on social media?
- What are the outcomes of the service?
- What feedback has WCHG sought from beneficiaries of the service?
- What is the process following a report?
- Do we provide added security for customers?
- Has the service received any complaints?
- Do we have data on how reports came through to us?

## In completing the review, members of the Scrutiny Group carried out the following activities:

- Desktop review of key information:
  - Review of Policy
  - Review of information available to residents and tenants on the WCHG website
  - Review of Social Media
  - Benchmarked against other websites
- Interview lead manager Victoria Grant, Living Well Manager (safeguarding) and Sarah Lomax, Senior Living Well Co-ordinator

# Findings

# Do WCHG have a policy for how we respond to Domestic Abuse?

## Finding:

Yes, it does. The policy reads well and has everything you would want from a policy and is easy to understand.

## Recommendations

5.2 Consider the language (sanctuary rooms – do people know what they are?)

7.1 within 24hours is not always possible especially if weekend period, reconsider this



# Do we co-operate with the local authority to meet its duty to provide services for victims and their children within safe accommodation?

## Finding:

Yes.

WCHG contributes to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) which meets every two weeks to ensure everything that can be done, is being done to support tenants identified as most at risk. The conference usually reviews around 30 are reviewed. All relevant services are involved, child services etc.

WCHG also support multi-agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC) meetings to reduce domestic abuse. These meetings are chaired by the Police and work across agencies to influence the behaviours of perpetrators of domestic abuse.

## Recommendations

None

# Is the website providing sufficient information to help people?

## **Finding:**

Yes. Overall the website is good and some features of the site are very good and focus on protecting the person seeking help.

## **Recommendations**

To avoid the perpetrator seeing what the victim is looking at, at the top of the page you can click off page to weather. However, once you click again you can see there is a trace of having viewed the domestic abuse information which is of concern for the victim.

There are some gaps on the website for different types of domestic abuse, cultural, LGBTQ+ etc.

Removal of old Domestic Abuse pages on website.

# What do other Housing Providers do? (benchmarking)

## Findings

The findings were very mixed in that some Housing Providers had really good websites with lots of information where others were really quite bad and insufficient.

## Good examples

- Stockport Homes
- Irwell Valley Homes
- Mosscafe St Vincent's
- Onward Homes

## Learning from other housing providers

- WCHG website could have more links to partner agencies offering support and details on using the 999 and hit 55 if can't speak service
- MSV had a video for signalling for help which was a good example
- One site provided for men-only help which wasn't on any other site

# What is put on social media?

## Findings:

Social media is seriously lacking in any Domestic Abuse information, though we do and have shared posts, though time between is lacking.

## Recommendations

More posts around help available should be published on Social Media – links to support agencies

# Has WCHG developed any new public campaigns with partners?

- WCHG held Safeguarding Autumns internally for staff
- 16 Days of awareness in November
- Fold out leaflet on Domestic Abuse
- Poster campaign across WCHG offices

## Recommendations

Consider utilising libraries for leaflets and awareness around domestic abuse

# **What are the outcomes of the service?**

## **Findings:**

Greater Manchester Combined Authority collates data and statistics that are reported and shared within the MARAC, these are not published.

Each conference focuses on 30 priority urgent cases from across all sectors and all the relevant agencies are involved in this.

**The outcomes of the service provided is to ensure the safety of domestic abuse survivors**

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide with a gradient from orange on the left to dark purple on the right.

# What feedback has WCHG sought from beneficiaries of the service?

- The service does not currently seek feedback from its customers – there is nervousness about causing customers more issues if a partner sees that they have accessed the service, however there are also ways around this that need to be considered and WCHG is aware they need to improve
- WCHG has a long-standing relationship with Safe Spots, a local charity tackling domestic abuse and led by domestic abuse survivors. This gives a safe way for survivors of domestic abuse to influence WCHG policy and procedures.

# What is the process following a report?

- Following a report, a duty officer will make contact and complete a DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment) risk assessment
- Anyone deemed to score high is referred to MARAC and safety measures are put into place
- 21 Questions on DASH – anything more than 14 is a person in danger
- The MARAC process is then followed
- Where rehousing is required, the Neighbourhood officer is involved

## Recommendations

None

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide with a gradient from orange on the left to purple on the right.



# Do we provide added security for customers?

Yes - £11,000 budget for target hardening is provided for things like

- Lowering hedges
- Padlocks to gates
- Security lighting
- Window shock alarms
- Strategic mirrors
- Fireproof letter box
- Plastic film on windows
- Ring Doorbell

So far (April – July) £4,000 has been spent this year.

## Recommendations

None

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide with a gradient from orange on the left to dark blue on the right.

## Has the service received any complaints?

Two complaints have been received in the last 2 years, which is low:

- One complaint related to CCTV
- The other related to reporting domestic abuse

## Recommendations

None

# Do we have data on how reports come through to us?

- Reporting of Domestic Abuse can come from any source
- WCHG review MARAC site and pull off the DASH assessment and contact the survivor of Domestic Abuse.
- Housing Applications can raise a DA concern.
- When staff are made aware of an issue, they complete an 'If in doubt, shout' report.
- Any reports are produced by MARAC and shared with all members of the collaboration and the focus is 30 of the most extreme cases each time there is a meeting.
- Reporting data can be provided where needed for WCHG.

## Next steps

Currently no method of knowing where the initial point of contact has come from to enable targeted support/marketing of services, DAHA will enable this via pulse. Scrutiny would like to review following the neighbourhoods team implementation of Pulse.

# Recommendations

# Scrutiny Group recommendations

## Customer voice

- Develop a safe way of seeking feedback from users of domestic abuse about the service to make sure that it meets their needs and that they feel that they are treated with sensitivity and respect – this is a big gap and should be addressed this year

## Promotion of service

- Add more posts on social media around support for victims of domestic abuse and links to support
- Utilise community centres and libraries to promote support available

## Website

- Add more links to support on website, include the hit 55 if you cannot speak service when calling 999
- Website needs to be more inclusive, consider specialist awareness information for people from different cultures, LGBTQ+ and men-only
- The click out of the website leaves a trace at the top so an abuser will know what they have viewed – can this be improved?
- Consider using a video similar to the one MSV have on signalling for help
- Remove all old pages on Domestic abuse as still some on there pre covid.

## Policy

- Consider the language in the policy – people will not know what a sanctuary room is
- Point 7.1 of policy says within 24hrs, if a weekend this is not possible so is misleading

## Further check

- Scrutiny Group would like an update report in March 2025 on what improvements have been made as a result of the DAHA accreditation

## SG CHAIR FEEDBACK TO CXC

- This was an interesting review, particularly emotive and in some parts difficult for members, though a worthwhile review and Scrutiny are keen to see the outcomes of the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation results in the future.
- Scrutiny were overall impressed with the support provided to domestic abuse survivors and look forward to seeing the changes needed implemented.



Wythenshawe  
Community Housing Group