

HOUSING DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Field	Details
Directorate	Housing Services
Policy Owner	Assistant Director Tenancy Services
Approval Body	Director of Housing Services
Approval Date	To be confirmed
Review Date	To be confirmed
Version	2.0
Status	Draft

Policy Change History

Version	Date	Description	Approved By
1.0	2022	Original policy	Director of Housing Services
2.0	2026	Policy updated to reflect changes in operational practice, emerging case complexity and the revised housing response approach. This includes alignment with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy, and relevant London-wide strategic guidance, including the London Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025–2028. The policy also incorporates learning from service delivery and multi-agency working.	

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out how the Council's Housing Services will respond when domestic abuse affects a person's housing or tenancy.
- 1.2. It explains:
- the Council's approach to supporting people affected by domestic abuse;
 - the principles that guide housing decisions;
 - the housing options that may be available; and
 - how the Council will meet its legal and strategic responsibilities.
- 1.3. The operational arrangements for implementing this policy are set out in the Housing Domestic Abuse Procedure. This policy supports the delivery of the Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy in relation to the Council's housing responsibilities and reflects its survivor-centred approach to responding to domestic abuse.

Getting help

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need help or support, you can find information about services available in Newham here:

[Domestic abuse and sexual violence support – Newham Council](#)

Housing support:

[Domestic and sexual violence support \(DSV\) – Your council tenancy](#)

[Homelessness assistance – Homelessness prevention and advice](#)

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999.

2. Scope and terminology

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
- council tenants and leaseholders

- housing applicants and residents accessing housing services
- Housing Services staff
- contractors or partners delivering housing services on behalf of the Council

2.2. This policy applies where domestic abuse affects:

- an existing council tenancy
- a housing application
- a request for homelessness assistance.

3. Definition of Domestic Abuse

3.1. For the purposes of this policy, domestic abuse is defined in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as abusive behaviour between people who are personally connected.

3.2. Domestic abuse can consist of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse; and
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

3.3. Domestic abuse can involve a single incident or a pattern of behaviour and can take different forms in practice. This can include stalking and harassment, technology-facilitated abuse, forced marriage and so-called 'honour'-based abuse, where these occur within the context of domestic abuse.

3.4. Controlling or coercive behaviour may include actions designed to:

- isolate a person from friends, family or support networks;
- control access to money or resources; or
- monitor or restrict movement or communication, including through technology or digital devices.

3.5. In a housing context, economic abuse may include behaviour that results in rent arrears, tenancy-related debt or damage to the home as a means of controlling or harming a survivor.

3.6. The Council recognises that domestic abuse can involve family members as well as current or former partners and can continue after relationships end.

- 3.7. In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Council recognises children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse, and meet the relationship requirements set out in the Act, as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. Housing responses will take account of their safety, needs and welfare.

4. Policy Principles

4.1. The Council will:

- take all reports of domestic abuse seriously;
- apply the survivor informed principles set out in the Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy: We Listen – listen to survivors and their experiences; We Believe – respond to disclosures with respect and without judgement; and We Act – take appropriate action to support safety;
- prioritise the safety and wellbeing of those affected;
- recognise that every domestic abuse case is different and respond according to the individual's circumstances;
- provide a consistent, person-centred and lawful housing response;
- adopt a trauma-informed approach that recognises the impact domestic abuse can have on an individual's wellbeing and communication;
- treat individuals with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality;
- respect individual choice wherever this is compatible with safety, legal duties and available housing options;
- not require individuals to report domestic abuse to the Police before accessing housing support;
- minimise the need for individuals to repeatedly disclose their experiences of abuse;
- take reasonable steps to ensure communication and methods of contact promote safety, confidentiality and wellbeing;
- recognise that children can also be affected by domestic abuse and consider their needs when making housing decisions;
- seek to ensure Housing Services are accessible, equitable and inclusive, responsive to the diverse needs of those affected, and informed by intersectional, anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice; and
- work collaboratively with internal services and external partners, including safeguarding and specialist domestic abuse services, to provide a coordinated housing response that improves safety and reduces the risk of further harm.

5. Council Responsibilities and Approach

5.1. The Council is responsible for:

- responding appropriately to reports of domestic abuse affecting people accessing housing services
- taking account of risk and safety when making housing decisions
- meeting its duties under homelessness, domestic abuse, safeguarding, equality and data protection legislation
- taking reasonable steps to prevent homelessness where possible
- securing accommodation where required where there is a risk of harm
- working with relevant agencies to support individuals affected by domestic abuse

5.2. Housing Services recognises that responding effectively to domestic abuse requires a coordinated approach that supports survivors, considers appropriate action in relation to perpetrators and works collaboratively with partner agencies to reduce the risk of further harm

5.3. Where there is a risk of harm, the Council will consider housing options in line with its legal duties, eligibility criteria and available housing supply.

5.4. The Council recognises that there is no single housing response that is appropriate for every domestic abuse case. Decisions will be based on the individual circumstances of the case, the level of risk, the Council's legal duties and the housing options available.

5.5. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Council will:

- act on safeguarding concerns in accordance with relevant procedures
- make decisions that are lawful, proportionate and appropriately recorded
- share information where there is a lawful basis to do so
- consider tenancy or housing management action where appropriate and safe
- where appropriate and consistent with the Council's legal duties, consider all reasonable housing management and legal options to enable survivors to remain safely in their home before determining that alternative accommodation is the most appropriate response.

5.6. Responding to Perpetrators

The Council recognises that an effective response to domestic abuse requires both supporting survivors and taking appropriate action in relation to perpetrators. Housing responses will seek to avoid placing responsibility for addressing a perpetrator's behaviour on the survivor. Housing Services will work with the police and relevant partner agencies to support appropriate action in relation to perpetrators, consider tenancy management and legal remedies where available, and take proportionate action to reduce the risk of further harm to survivors, children and other household members.

5.7. Housing Services staff are responsible for applying this policy in line with Council procedures and escalating safeguarding concerns where necessary. Housing Services will ensure that relevant staff receive appropriate training to support them to identify and respond to domestic abuse effectively. Training requirements will be set out in the Housing Domestic Abuse Training Plan.

5.8. Recognising Complexity

- The Council recognises that domestic abuse can take different forms and may not always be immediately apparent, and survivors may face barriers to disclosing abuse or seeking support.
- Abuse may involve family members as well as intimate partners
- Individuals may not wish to relocate away from support networks

5.9 In some cases, professional advice may suggest relocation to increase safety, while the resident may wish to remain close to their support network. The Council recognises that relocation may itself have consequences for an individual's support networks and wider circumstances. When deciding the most appropriate housing response, the Council will consider the individual's safety, wishes, legal duties and the housing options available.

6. Housing Response Principles

6.1. Existing tenants

6.2. If a council tenant reports domestic abuse, Housing Services will:

- listen to the individual and take their concerns seriously
- consider immediate safety and risk
- discuss available housing options
- agree appropriate next steps

6.3. Depending on circumstances, the Council may:

- carry out a risk assessment
- refer or signpost to specialist domestic abuse support services, including Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), where appropriate;
- work with the police or other agencies where appropriate;
- consider tenancy or legal action against a perpetrator where safe;

6.4. The Council will not:

- require a police report before taking action
- require repeated disclosure where this can be avoided

6.5. Homelessness or risk of homelessness

6.6. Where a person approaches the Council due to domestic abuse, the Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service will:

- assess the person's circumstances
- consider duties under homelessness legislation
- consider the provision of emergency or temporary accommodation where there is an immediate risk to safety, in line with the Council's legal duties, eligibility criteria and available accommodation
- the availability and type of accommodation will depend on individual circumstances, the level of risk and available housing supply.

6.7. Housing and tenancy options

6.8. Where domestic abuse affects housing, the Council may:

- support a person to remain in their home where it is safe to do so
- support a move to alternative accommodation where this is necessary to reduce risk or meet housing needs. Rehousing decisions will be made having regard to risk, legal duties, available housing supply and the circumstances of the individual case.
- consider tenancy changes, including management transfers
- consider tenancy enforcement action, legal remedies and other appropriate housing management interventions against perpetrators where lawful, proportionate and safe to do so.

6.9. Partnership working

Housing Services will work with relevant partner agencies, where appropriate, including:

- police
- social care
- health services, including acute hospitals
- domestic abuse support services
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)
- other housing providers and relevant partner agencies, where appropriate

6.10. Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately where necessary, including where required to respond to safeguarding concerns or protect a child or adult from harm.

6.11. The Council recognises that rehousing may not always resolve the underlying risk, particularly in cases involving family members or where the individual wishes to remain in their local area. Housing

responses will therefore be considered alongside support from partner agencies and other safeguarding measures, where appropriate.

6.12. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

6.13. The Council will:

- keep records securely and appropriately
- share information where there is a lawful basis to do so, including in response to safeguarding concerns where appropriate; and
- seek to minimise the need for repeated disclosure

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Director of Housing Services	Overall accountability for this policy
Assistant Director / Programme Director	Strategic oversight
Service Managers	Operational oversight
Housing Officers	Apply this policy when managing domestic abuse cases
Homelessness Prevention and Advice Service (HPAS)	Carry out statutory homelessness duties
Housing Liaison and Allocations	Manage rehousing arrangements
Partner Agencies	Provide specialist support and information where appropriate

8. Equality and Diversity

- 8.1. This policy will be implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.2. The Council recognises that domestic abuse can affect anyone and will seek to ensure that services are accessible and responsive to individual needs.
- 8.3. Housing responses will seek to take account of individual circumstances, protected characteristics, care experience and any barriers to accessing support.
- 8.4. Housing Services will seek to provide a non-judgemental and non-stigmatising response to those affected by domestic abuse.
- 8.5. Housing responses will, wherever reasonably practicable, take account of the individual's wishes, circumstances and any additional barriers they may face when accessing housing services.

9. Complaints

- 9.1. Residents who are unhappy with the service they have received may raise a concern or make a complaint through the Council's Housing Complaints process.

10. Monitoring and Review

- 10.1. The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed six months after implementation, to identify any learning and whether any changes are required.
- 10.2. The Council will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy, taking account of available service information, feedback, complaints, relevant learning and, where appropriate, feedback from partner agencies.
- 10.3. Following the six-month review, the policy will normally be reviewed every three years.
- 10.4. A review may be triggered earlier in response to:
 - changes in legislation or regulation
 - service or operational changes
 - learning from complaints or Housing Ombudsman findings
 - internal audit or safeguarding reviews

11. Related Documents

- [Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Housing Allocation Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policies](#)
- [Tenancy Management Policy](#)

12. Legal, Regulatory and Strategic Framework

This policy is informed by relevant legislation, including:

- [Housing Act 1985](#)
- [Housing Act 1996](#)
- [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#)
- [Secure Tenancies \(Victims of Domestic Abuse\) Act 2018](#)

- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation - GOV.UK](#)

This policy has also been informed by national, regional and local strategies, including the Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy and the [London Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025-2028](#)

This includes consideration of:

- access to safe accommodation
- partnership working
- the diverse needs of survivors
- the importance of a coordinated multi-agency response
- This policy also supports the delivery of the Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy by setting out the Council's housing response to domestic abuse and promoting partnership working, safeguarding and a coordinated housing response to survivors and their families.