Domestic Abuse Policy

Version:	V1
Date Approved:	25 March 2025
Review Plan:	Annual
Review Date:	25 March 2026
Policy Owner:	Head of Operations / Director: Risk & Governance

Contents

Purpose 3
Definitions and scope 3
Our approach 5
Reporting domestic abuse 5
Our initial response 6
Further action 6
Partnership working and data protection 7
Staff training and awareness 7
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion 8
References 8
Document Control 9
Appendix 1: Legal Framework 10
Appendix 2: National support contacts 11

Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide assurance to customers that threats or acts of domestic abuse are taken seriously, and to outline how we will respond to reports of such abuse affecting customers or members of their households.
2. The aim of this policy is to:
    - Ensure that customers experiencing domestic abuse can approach us in confidence knowing that Windrush Alliance UK CIC, colleagues will be supportive and non-judgmental.
    - Confirm that we will take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and we will respond quickly.
    - Provide assurance that we work closely with other agencies within our communities enabling us to take a coordinated response to domestic abuse.
    - Outline our responsibilities and the support that is available to people who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Definitions and scope

3. Windrush Alliance UK CIC has adopted the statutory definition of domestic abuse set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. **Domestic abuse** is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as follows:

    (1) Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if:

    a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and

    b) The behaviour is abusive.

    (2) Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following:

    a) Physical or sexual abuse

    b) Violent or threatening behaviour

    c) Controlling or coercive behaviour

    d) Economic abuse (see below)

    e) Psychological, emotional, or other abuse (including online / digital)

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

    (3) "Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to

    a) Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or

b) 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)"

Personally connected is defined in Section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:

(1) "For the purposes of this Part, two people are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies

a) they are, or have been, married to each other

b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other

c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other

f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see below); they are relatives.

(2) A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if

a) the person is a parent of the child, or

b) the person has, or has had, parental responsibility for the child

(3) In this section

- "child" means a person under the age of 18 years
- "Civil partnership agreement" has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- "Parental responsibility" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act)
- "relative" has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996"

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

- Physical abuse - pushing, 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 survivor perform sexual acts, rape, and non-consensual acts of sex.

- Controlling behaviour - can involve a range of acts designed 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 - an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a person.
- Economic abuse - controlling money and bank accounts, running up debts in a survivor's name, allowing no say on how money is spent.
- Psychological and emotional abuse - creating isolation, excessively checking up on someone and monitoring where they are, using physical power to intimidate, humiliating and undermining someone, gaslighting, criticising and blaming them for abuse (including online / digital)

5. We recognise that various kinds of abuse can happen in different contexts including between partners but also between other family members. We will consider these cases within the scope of this policy.
6. This policy also includes violence against women and girls including:
    - Stalking (domestic abuse and nondomestic abuse related stalking)
    - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
    - So called honour-based abuse
    - Forced Marriage
7. We recognise that domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
8. We recognise there are also additional barriers to services experienced by customers from protected groups and those experiencing multiple disadvantages, such as co-occurrences of factors such as risk of homelessness, drug and alcohol use, criminal justice system involvement and mental health.
9. We recognise that our own staff may experience domestic abuse and are committed to supporting them in any way that we can.

Our approach

Reporting domestic abuse

10. Customers can disclose domestic abuse to us through any contact they have with us, for example, through Housing Support Officer contact, social media direct message, by telephone, by email, in person or in writing.

11. We will provide a translation service and/or provide information in different languages or formats as needed.

Our initial response

12. Domestic abuse is a serious crime, and we will always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive, and non-judgmental way. We will take all reports seriously. We know that it can be incredibly difficult to report abuse, and we will deal with reports in a sensitive and supportive manner
13. We will respond within one working day, adopting a survivor and person-centred approach considering the needs of the customer and children in the household.
14. We employ staff who are trained to deal with domestic abuse and/or we work with agencies who specialist in supporting people in a domestic abuse situation, and as soon as we become aware of a domestic abuse report, we will talk through options, for example, a customer may prefer to talk to an employee of the same gender.
15. We will agree the method of contact the customer wishes us to use when communicating with them. This includes talking to us over the phone, through an online video call, at our offices or another safe venue.
16. During the interview, we will conduct a risk assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH 2009 risk model), which is a UK wide accredited form used by us and partner organisations to plan how we will support the customer and any children. If one our partner agencies have conducted a recent DASH Risk assessment, we will not conduct another assessment.
17. At the interview we will also agree and base our support on the individual needs of the customer/children. We recognise that not all people see themselves as victims or survivors, and we will make sure these labels are not associated with the customer disclosing to us.
18. Our Safeguarding lead will function as our organisations domestic abuse champion, providing support and guidance to customers, staff, and our stakeholders.

Further action

19. Where possible we will hold perpetrators of abuse to account including taking legal possession of their homes where appropriate. We will be clear that domestic abuse is never the fault of the customer or their children.
20. Our approach is survivor-centred, and we will consider the views of the person who has experienced abuse and their ongoing safety when deciding what happens next and we will communicate out intended actions before taking steps.
21. We may make a referral for specialist support or additional security in the home if that is something the customer needs and wants.

22. We will not pressure an abuse survivor to take legal action but will support them if they choose to do so.

23. We will provide advice about alternative housing, additional security measures in the home and suitable support from specialist organisations (Women's Aid, Local Refuge organisations etc.). If a customer is concerned about their immediate safety, we will work in partnership with relevant partners to ensure suitable measures are in place to support them.

    Victims of Domestic Violence can put an application of Homelessness into the Local Authority and where required they may be able to move Local Authority but cannot make themselves intentionally homeless.

24. We will act against the perpetrator where appropriate and may provide perpetrators with housing advice including relocation where this is possible.

25. Our colleagues are trained to be aware of potential need for safeguarding and to make safeguarding referrals as needed. We will keep in touch with, and support, customers who report domestic abuse for as long as the customer feels necessary.

Partnership working and data protection

26. We keep an up-to-date list of a range of agencies in our local areas which may be able to offer advice or support, and we maintain good working relationships with local agencies. We are able to refer customers to relevant agencies for various kinds of support, for example, on financial issues or for legal advice.

27. We are also able to signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse to specific agencies of they want support to change their behaviour.

28. We respect customers right to privacy and will act in line with our Data Protection Policy. Although we have data sharing agreements in place with the agencies, we work with to protect our customers' privacy, we will never force anyone to share any information with us if they do not want to. We will ask the customer's permission before sharing information unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of children or a vulnerable adult.

29. Agencies such as the police may request personal data about a customer as part of their information gathering. In these cases, we will assess the sharing of data on a case-by-case basis, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

30. We will always verify identity before disclosing any personal or sensitive information.

Staff training and awareness

31. Our colleagues who deal directly with customers receive regular training on how to spot signs of potential abuse or of safeguarding concerns. Certain colleagues

are also trained in more detail in responding to reports of domestic abuse and in providing support to survivors of domestic abuse.

32. Our partner contractors are also required to undertake awareness training so that they can let us know if they see something that concerns them.

33. All colleagues and maintenance contractors working for [name of organisation] undertake regular training in safeguarding and modern slavery awareness.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

34. Windrush Alliance UK CIC will ensure the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

35. Actions under this policy will ensure that all employees will be treated fairly, with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender or gender reassignment, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

References

36. Links to other internal policies include:

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Colleague Domestic Abuse Procedure

Document Control

Version Number	Description of Change(s) Applied and Reason	Author of Change	Date approved by board

Appendix 1: Legal Framework

This policy operates within the wide context of a regulatory and legal framework. This framework includes, but is not exclusive to:

- RSH Regulatory Standard: Neighbourhood and Community

1.4 Domestic abuse

1.4.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

2.3 Domestic abuse

2.3.1 Registered providers must have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse.

2.3.2 Registered providers must co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2012
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Housing Acts 1985, 1996 2003, and 2004 (as amended)
- Children Act 1989 • Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- Local Government Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Appendix 2: National support contacts

Name	Service	Weblink	Phone	Email
Refuge – National Domestic Abuse Helpline	National Domestic Abuse helpline. Contact by phone is free, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Live chat available Monday to Friday 3pm to 10pm	https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en	0808 2000 247	n/a
Galop	Supporting LGBT+ people who are victims of domestic and other forms of abuse	https://galop.org.uk/	0800 999 5428	help@galop.org.uk
Women's Aid	Women's Aid is a national charity working to support domestic abuse against women and children. Live chat 7 days per week between 10am and 6pm. A list of local of local support services is available via their website	https://www.womensaid.org.uk/	n/a	helpline@womensaid.org.uk
Respect – Men's advice line	Helpline for male victims of domestic abuse. Telephone support available Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm.	https://mensadviceline./	0808 8010327	info@mensadviceline.org.uk
Karma Nirvana	National Honour Based Abuse helpline. Service can be contacted by telephone Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.	https://karmanirvana.org.uk/	0800 5999 247	n/a
Safe Spaces	A safe and confidential room where victims can take some time to reflect, access information on specialist support services or call friends or family.	https://uksaysnomore.org/	n/a	n/a