

**Policy on:**

**Domestic Abuse**

**Compliant with Charter  
Outcomes and Standards:**

Yes

**Compliant with Equalities:**

Yes

**Compliant with Business Plan:**

Yes

**Compliant with Risk:**

Yes

**Equalities Impact Assessment  
Completed as part of Review**

Yes

**Date for Approval:**

**May 2024**

**Date for Review:**

**May 2029**

**Responsible Officers:**

**Housing Manager**

This policy is available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.



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## 1. Introduction

To fulfil our vision of Great Homes, Great People and Vibrant Communities, Shire Housing Association is committed to putting our customers at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

We have developed this policy to set out how Shire Housing Association views domestic abuse, how we will respond to and seek to deal with any reports of such abuse affecting tenants or members of their households. Shire Housing Association recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue and can impact on many households and we will take all practical steps to support individuals who are the subject of domestic abuse.

### Definition of Domestic Abuse

Shire Housing Association will use the Scottish Government definition of domestic abuse which is: -

**“Domestic Abuse**, as gender based violence, can be perpetrated by partners or ex partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, with-holding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends”. It can be characterised by a pattern of coercive control often escalating in frequency and severity over time.

Controlling behaviour is 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 is an act or pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim. Domestic violence and abuse can manifest itself through the actions of immediate and extended family members via unlawful activities, such as forced marriage, ‘honour-based abuse’ and female genital mutilation. Extended family members may condone or even share in the pattern of abuse. Any such actions are not acceptable, whatever form they take.

## 2. Policy Aims and Objectives



Shire Housing Association encourages all tenants, household members and staff to report domestic abuse, whether they are victims of, or witnesses to, such incidents. All disclosures or intelligence around Domestic Abuse will be confidential, and information will be held securely.

By adopting this policy, we aim to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of domestic abuse to help victims who are tenants/household members.
- Encourage the reporting of domestic abuse.
- Ensure our tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse feel they can approach the Association in confidence knowing that staff will be equipped to signpost to the appropriate support services.
- Treat all reports of domestic violence seriously and as a matter of high priority.
- Empower victims by providing information on options available to them.

### **3. Supporting Legislation, Regulations, Guidance, Strategies and Policies**

Our policy has been developed taking into account the legislation and guidance governing Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Legislation relevant to our policy includes:

- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 and 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011
- Homelessness etc. (Scotland Act) 2003
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014
- Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001

### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Shire Housing will: -

- Ensure that employees understand the important role they can play in tackling domestic abuse.
- Provide training and guidance for staff supporting tenants experiencing domestic abuse.



- Support tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse by taking a proactive and sympathetic survivor-centred approach.
- Take a non-judgemental approach to victims of domestic abuse.
- Work with other agencies to deliver the best possible outcome for victims with safety being the overriding priority. This will also include signposting victims to external support agencies and assist victims to access such support.
- Assist victims to obtain temporary accommodation or suitable permanent alternative accommodation as appropriate. We will work in partnership with the local authority and support agencies.
- Encourage victims to allow us to share information with the Police and local authority services to pursue appropriate civil and/or criminal action.
- Treat all information confidentially unless obliged to disclose by law, where a child is at risk or there is a high risk of harm to someone else.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies and partners including Scottish Women's Aid, East Ayrshire Women's Aid, East Ayrshire Council and Police Scotland.
- Focus on raising awareness of domestic abuse including the sources of support and assistance available to victims and by challenging attitudes and reinforcing the principal that domestic abuse is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.
- Promote awareness through information in our tenant handbook, newsletters, website, and social media.

Shire Housing recognise that every case of domestic abuse will be different, therefore our response will be tailored to the individual circumstance and the needs of the victim.

When a tenant or a household member reports domestic abuse, all available options will be discussed with them including: -

- Personal safety.
- Housing options.
- Reporting incidents to the police, which may result in criminal actions being raised against the perpetrator.
- Possibility of legal action being taking against the perpetrator by Shire Housing.
- Where there is a significant risk, referrals being made to external agencies.
- Support services available
- Make arrangements for their immediate personal safety.
- Where the victim requires advice or assistance, we will offer an interview by someone of the same sex.
- We will provide a range of housing options to meet the individual needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- Support victims to remain in their home.
- Use management transfers to support victims to make planned moves and avoid homelessness.
- Support victims to gain legal information and advice.
- Support relocation across different locations through partnership working.



## **5. Equality and Diversity**

This Policy complies fully with Shire Housing Association' Equality and Diversity Policy. Shire Housing Association will be proactive in valuing and promoting diversity, fairness, social justice, and equality of opportunity by adopting and promoting fair policies and procedures.

We are committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all our stakeholders including customers and will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave; race; religion and belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

We carry out Equality Impact Assessments when we review our policies. We check policies and associated procedures regularly to ensure accessibility for all. We take appropriate action to address inequalities likely to result or resulting from the implementation of the policy and procedures.

## **6. Feedback and Complaints**

Shire Housing Association strives to always provide an excellent customer service and welcomes feedback and comments from our customers. We will seek feedback via our website, e-mail, in writing and verbally to learn from service users' experiences, using them to shape and develop our service.

We operate a Complaints Policy that is open and transparent, should any customer or service user feel the need to make a complaint against an individual or the organisation, the complaints policy and procedure will be implemented. All complaints will be recorded and dealt with under Complaints Policy and Procedures, which meet the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

## **7. Performance Monitoring and Review**

In addition to the annual submission of performance against the Annual Return on the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Management Board will review and approve Key Performance Indicators and targets on an annual basis and outcomes will be monitored at quarterly meetings.

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years or earlier if deemed necessary due to legislative, best practice or other changes.

