

Domestic Abuse Customer Policy

1.0	SCOPE
	Purpose
1.1.	This document sets out whg’s policy towards supporting customers experiencing Domestic Abuse (DA)
1.2.	The aim of the Policy is to support customers experiencing DA and mitigate the risk of DA to all customers, to assist those who are affected by DA where appropriate.
1.3.	We take all forms of DA seriously and are committed to ensuring that customers experiencing DA are provided with a fair, sensitive, and confidential service.
1.4.	whg adopts the Home Office definition of DA: ‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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 sexuality’.
1.5.	This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychological • physical • sexual • financial • emotional This includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
	Legal and regulatory framework
1.6.	This Policy is designed to comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities.

1.7.	<p>whg are signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing ‘Make a Stand’ pledge and its four commitments which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are experiencing domestic abuse • To make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other places which are easily accessible to residents and staff • To put in place a HR policy and procedure on domestic abuse, or to incorporate this into an existing policy, to support members of staff who are experiencing domestic abuse • Appoint a champion in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse <p>Our DA champion is the Director of Housing.</p>
1.8.	<p>whg recognise the benefits of Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) and will always look to signpost customers to their closest IDVA service were appropriate.</p>
2.0	POLICY STATEMENT
	Our Response
2.1.	<p>Customers experiencing DA will receive a confidential and sensitive service. We will speak to them via telephone, email or face to face dependent upon their preference and any potential risk. We are happy where safe, to visit customers in their home, or to see them at any of our offices that are open for customers.</p>
2.2.	<p>Customers will receive advice, they will be signposted to any relevant partner that may be able to assist further, they will receive target hardening advice and support and, where there is a high risk of further serious harm, consideration will be given to re-housing</p>
2.3.	<p>whg works closely with partner agencies in relation to the prevention of DA and support of any customer experiencing DA. Partners include the Police, the relevant Local Authority, Social Services and specialist DA services such as Women’s Aid.</p>
2.4.	<p>All discussions with customers will be confidential but any safeguarding concerns regarding children will be reported. We may also report serious criminal matters and concerns regarding serious future risk (including adult safeguarding) to the Police</p>
	Target Hardening and Re-Housing

2.5.	whg will always seek to support victims to remain in their homes by target hardening and providing support. There is evidence to indicate that, if rehousing is not done appropriately, it can actually heighten the risk to the victim
2.6.	Target Hardening means reducing or mitigating particular risks of DA. This can involve providing advice to a customer about changing their daily routine, their online security or general crime prevention advice or it could mean making physical changes to their home, for example adding additional locks or installing CCTV or window alarms.
2.7.	The re-housing of victims will be considered if they are at significant risk in their current home. In these cases whg will undertake an assessment of how the risk will be mitigated if re-housing is arranged. If re-housing is agreed, customers will be considered to have a 'critical need' and receive 'gold' banding in accordance with whg's allocations policy.
2.8.	In the event that rehousing is agreed, customers will be spoken to in detail about what will be required from whg and the customer in order for the rehousing to increase safety and mitigate the risk of further DA. Failure to follow the advice and guidance provided may result in the customer becoming at risk of DA again despite moving home.
2.9.	Customers who are due to be re-housed because of DA can expect to receive a single one off offer of rehousing which will ordinarily be a 'like for like' property, (for example, a customer leaving a two bedroom flat will receive an offer for another two bedroom flat).
2.10.	The location of the new property could be any whg property in any area that would adequately mitigate the risk of further DA.
	Partnership working
2.11.	whg will work closely with partner agencies to respond to reports of DA, support victims and contribute to initiatives designed to prevent DA. We will be in regular contact with partners including Local Authorities, the NHS, the Police and local DA charities and support groups, including any stakeholder providing Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy services (IDVAs)
2.12.	whg will actively participate in any DA Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) that feature whg customers.
3.0	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3.1.	We will securely keep records of all reported cases of DA and monitor the data to identify and record the risk. All records will be held in accordance with our data protection policy.

3.2.	We will benchmark our performance on dealing with DA against other Registered Providers and implement learning and best practice.
3.3.	We will periodically undertake compliance audits to check that practice reflects this Policy and relevant operational procedures. We will implement any recommendations to ensure continued compliance. Training will be delivered to colleagues appropriate to their role.
3.4.	We will undertake regular casework reviews to ensure we are delivering a consistent and effective approach to DA and customers receive a high quality service.
3.5.	We will deal with complaints from customers about the quality of our handling of DA matters through our Customer Experience Policy and Complaints Procedure.
4.0	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
4.1	Our Domestic Abuse policy is inclusive for all genders. Around two thirds of all DA victims are recorded as female with the remaining third male. Protected characteristics such as disability will always be considered in relation to victims of Domestic Abuse especially with consideration to target hardening and rehousing. Through creating a consistent DA offer, we are not disadvantaging any customers.
5.0	TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION
5.1.	Specialist training is provided to all colleagues that deal with Domestic Abuse. Domestic abuse awareness and reporting training is delivered to all customer facing colleagues in order to raise awareness of DA and help colleagues to identify signs that DA may be potentially taking place so that they can be investigated.
6.0	MONITOR AND REVIEW
6.1.	This Policy will be monitored by the Director of Housing and reviewed every three years by the Policy Group and approved by the Customer Experience Committee.
7.0	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
7.1	Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour Policy • Allocations Policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIH 'Make a Stand' DA pledge• Data Protection policy• Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014• Crime and Disorder Act 1998• Crime and Policing Act 2014• Protection from Harassment Act 1997• Equality Act 2010• Human Rights Act 1998• Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Housing Act 1985 amendment)
--	---

Document author	James Wall, Community Safety Operations Manager
Document owner	Gary Brookes, Director of Housing
Legal advice	Legal advice obtained for existing policy
Consultation	Local authority DA team, Police public protection and high risk DA team
Approved by	Policy Group May 2022
Review Date	May 2025
Corporate Plan aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To deliver high quality homes and services
Equality Assessment	Completed and submitted April 2022
Key changes made	No significant changes, policy externally reviewed in 2021 as part of Local Authorities Strategic needs assessment