



Domestic Abuse Policy



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Links to the Business Plan	<p>Housing and Neighbourhood Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish high performing and highly effective estate services and community development services.• Ensure the highest standards of safe working practices, ensuring our homes and communities are safe places to live and work
Links to Key Values	<p>Diversity: This strategy sets out our approach to providing homelessness housing and support services for diverse client group.</p> <p>Accountability: We recognise the need to provide joined up services that compliment those others provide.</p> <p>Excellence: we will aspire to be the best among our peers, particularly in the quality of our provision of homelessness services.</p>



Scope of Policy

This Policy sets out the approach to be adopted by emh homes in relation to dealing with all forms of domestic abuse.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Within emh homes we believe that our customers should not live in fear of abuse or violence from a partner, former partner, or other member of their household. We will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from, or threatened with domestic violence and or abuse.
- 1.2 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England (Neighbourhood and Community Standard) requires registered providers to work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes. Regulatory action may be taken where failure to meet the standard has caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants.
- 1.3 It is a condition of the emh homes tenancy agreements that residents must: 'not threaten, abuse, or commit any act of violence against any other person living in your home, including a joint tenant. If any member of your household has left because of violence towards them or threats of violence towards them or a member of their family who was living with them, and we are satisfied that the person who has left is unlikely to return, we may take action to regain possession of your home'.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all emh homes customers who are victims of domestic violence/abuse perpetrated by a spouse or partner, former spouse or partner or other member of their household/family. The perpetrator may be someone living in the same property as the victim, or be a visitor to their home, estate or neighbourhood.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with emh homes Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

2. Definition

- 2.1 Emh homes has adopted the Government definition of domestic violence and abuse which states; Domestic abuse, or domestic violence, is defined across Government as any incident 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 their gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse:
 - Physical Abuse – slapping, pushing, kicking, punching, stabbing attempted murder or murder, and abduction
 - Sexual Abuse – rape and non consensual sexual acts
 - Emotional or psychological abuse – intimidation, isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, not allowing friends / relatives to visit, destruction of belongings, threats legal sanctions e.g. deportations, custody of children etc.

- Financial abuse – denial of rights or restrictions of personal freedom e.g. withholding money or medical help

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
- 2.4 This policy on domestic violence and abuse also covers what is commonly referred to as Honour Based Violence (HBV) and forced marriage.
- 2.5 The Government defines HBV as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code.
- 2.6 We recognise that HBV has many similarities for other forms of domestic violence/abuse but is also very different. We will adopt the same principles outlined in this policy when dealing with a case reported to us; but we also recognise that additional sensitivity and indeed expertise in this area may be required. This would also include female genital mutilation.
- 2.7 We acknowledge that domestic violence/abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender or transgender status, social group, class, economic status, age, race, disability, religion or geographic location. We recognise that domestic violence/abuse is under-reported.

3. Commitment to Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 We have signed up to the 'Make a Stand' pledge which was launched in June 2018 by the CIH in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) and Women's Aid.
- 3.2 We have committed to the four key pledges;
 - Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
 - Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on your website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
 - Put in place a HR policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
 - Appoint a champion at a senior level in your organisation to own the activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

- 3.3 We recognise that not all our staff will be experts in this area and that we do not have the resources to deal with all aspects of domestic abuse. We will work in partnership with legal statutory and voluntary services to ensure services are provided in a co-ordinated way. We will ensure that we will signpost to support agencies. This may include the national Domestic Violence helpline, Women's Aid and Refuge.

4. Dealing With Incident of Domestic Abuse

- 4.1 We will encourage people to report incidents of domestic abuse. We will work to create an environment, which encourage victims to seek support and assistance by ensuring that:
- We explain the conditions in our tenancy agreement to new and existing tenants
 - Where there is an immediate concern for safety we will contact the Police to report the incident, provide the victim's emergency contact numbers.
 - All reports of abuse will be recorded on as High level of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) as outlined in our ASB Policy.
 - All staff have a responsibility to inform the housing team when made aware or are concerned about domestic abuse.
 - We will offer a named officer as point of contact who will deal with the report and remain the consistent point of contact for the victim.
 - We recognise that evidence of domestic abuse may be required for certain legal action but may not always be available in the first place. We will accept the report as detailed by the victim, without formal evidence until further investigations prove otherwise. This does not mean that the alleged perpetrator is immediately assumed to be guilty, but it does require that emh homes staff provide support, advice and assistance to victims.
 - Our service to those experiencing domestic abuse is available to all customers and translated information or information in other formats (Braille etc.) will be provided where required.
- 4.2 Our first priority is the safety of the person(s) experiencing domestic abuse including their families, where appropriate, and where the victim wishes it, we will:
- Liaise with specialist agencies to provide support and or housing;
 - Help those threatened with or suffering abuse or violence, where it is not safe for them to return home to access temporary accommodation with the Local Authority or other agency such as a refuge. We do not have emergency accommodation.
 - Safeguard and refer to MARAC board or relevant Police team where appropriate. We will ensure all high risk cases are monitored by the ASB team.
 - Provide advice to our tenants who wish to move permanently to alternative accommodation if they feel unable to remain in their home. This is likely to be through

Choice Based Lettings (CBL); if permanent re-housing is required we will consider requests through our managed move policy.

- We will offer information at community and estate events.

4.3 We will deal with all reports of domestic abuse seriously and confidentially, unless there is a legal obligation to disclose information to statutory services. We will not judge the victim and we will ensure that our response and actions focus on the needs of the victim, examples of what could be considered include;

- The option of being interviewed by someone of the same gender or of a similar ethnic or cultural background or sexual orientation, where this is possible.
- An interview at a location of their choice (subject to safety concerns).
- The option to have a friend or advocate present at the interview if they wish.
- Accurate and appropriate advice about their housing options and about their legal rights and responsibilities and appropriate financial and benefit advice.
- Repairs to the property which affect a person's security and health and safety and treat these as an emergency.
- Support to arrange repairs to leaseholders' homes including communal areas but the cost of doing so will be the responsibility of the leaseholder.

4.4 All cases of domestic abuse will be kept under review until agreed that the problems have been resolved satisfactorily or where no further action can be taken.

5. Equality and Diversity

5.1 We will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our customers. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion / faith, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity policy.

5.2 When applying this policy we will:

- Act with respect and consider the diverse needs of individual and communities.
- Take positive action to reduce the discrimination and harassment in local communities.

6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

6.1 In managing cases of domestic abuse, we work with other statutory agencies to share relevant and required information as and when appropriate which helps tackle domestic violence/abuse effectively. We follow the national support framework on information sharing for community safety guidelines laid down by the Home Office.

- 6.2 The type of information shared can vary on a case-by-case basis, but where possible, and in the first instance, we will share anonymised information (where others are not able to identify the individual the details relates to). This is also known as **depersonalised information**. There will be the exception where anonymised information is not possible and **personalised information** (that which can directly identify an individual) needs to be shared in order to achieve the required outcomes.
- 6.3 Prior to sharing information, we will ask ourselves whether there is a need to share information; what type of information should be shared; and if it is personalised information, whether it is within the law. Typically, we will take into account the following issues before reaching a decision:
- Is there a need to prevent and/or contain a crime, disorder or other public safety threat?
 - Is it necessary to protect vulnerable people?
 - Is there another way of tackling the problem?
 - In order to remove the 'threat', is it necessary to share information with statutory authorities to tackle the problem?
 - If sharing is required, can we share using depersonalised information (both in terms of perpetrator and victim information)? Will it achieve the required outcome? If **not**, what is the minimum amount of personalised information that would need to be shared to achieve the required outcome?
- 6.4 Our commitment to confidentiality extends to all communications. Staff will not produce any communications (internally or externally) that could potentially identify a victim by publishing victim or family names / location of the incident, or the location to which the victim has moved.

7. Monitoring and Accountability

- 7.1 Emh homes will keep a record of all domestic abuse and monitor data to improve performance and may tailor our service to the needs of our customers.
- 7.2 All cases will be managed and monitored through our CAS system on Orchard Housing. We will report to Board on domestic abuse reports, themes and risks on a quarterly basis.
- 7.3 Managers will ensure this policy is promoted, understood and implemented by all relevant employees ensuring consideration is given to any implications arising from policy decisions.
- 7.4 Emh homes will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and recommending policy changes to improve services and to reflect the changing external environment.
- 7.5 A review of this policy will be completed every three years.