

Domestic Abuse Policy

Version Control						
Version	Date drafted	Date approved	Approved by	Date reviewed	Next review date	Owner
Final	10/01/2025	27/01/2025	Board	N/A	27/01/2028	Head of Housing

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Westmoreland Supported Housing Limited (WSHL) is committed to working with other agencies to take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. We recognise that domestic abuse is a crime and has a considerable impact on the victim's physical and psychological wellbeing, and as such we will endeavour to help support them in living a life free from abuse.
- 1.2. WSHL has adopted the definition of domestic abuse as set out in Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

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.*

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;*
- (e) Psychological, emotional, or other abuse;*

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To establish a clear framework for identifying, addressing, and preventing domestic abuse among tenants.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all areas of work that WSHL undertakes and is for the people and communities in which it operates. It outlines our approach to assisting and supporting any person experiencing domestic abuse. We also recognise that our own staff may be experiencing domestic abuse and are committed to supporting them in any way that we can, following WSHL's safeguarding principles.

4. Legal and Regulatory Responsibilities

4.1. This policy ensures that WSHL is compliant with the below legislation and regulation:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Housing Act 1988, 1996
- Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004
- Police & Justice Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Antisocial Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Care Act 2014
- Clare's Law/Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)
- Stalking Protection Act 2019
- Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance 2022
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

5. Confidential Reporting

5.1. Domestic abuse will always be dealt with sympathetically and confidentially. WSHL staff will not pass on information to anyone else except with the agreement of the victim or unless required to do so by law or where information is needed for the protection of children and other vulnerable persons under WSHL's Safeguarding Policy.

6. Supporting Victims

6.1. When we become aware of a case of domestic abuse, we will ensure that all victims are:

- Listened to and believed;
- Reassured;
- Treated with respect;
- Provided with relevant information;
- Able to expect any reports to be kept confidential;
- Assured that WSHL will 'keep the door open' no matter what route they choose to take;
and
- Assured that they have choices/options.

6.2. WSHL will develop an action plan with the victim tailored to meet their needs, liaising, and making referrals to appropriate support agencies as identified, such as:

- Victim Support;
- Counselling services;
- Criminal/legal agencies;
- Facilitate safety improvements to the property;
- If it is not safe for the victim/witness to remain in their current property, we will try to offer alternative accommodation, if appropriate, or make a referral to another agency/landlord;
- We will, where possible and if requested, arrange for a member of staff of the same sex, sexual orientation, or ethnic background to conduct the interviews and home visits.

7. Supporting Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

7.1. WSHL will provide support to perpetrators wherever necessary and where they are willing to work with WSHL, to help them change their behaviour. This may include:

- Making referrals to drug and alcohol support agencies;
- Making referrals to counselling services;
- Ensuring that any perpetrator with mental health difficulties or other disabilities is referred to the most appropriate agency or organisation who can offer the support needed.

8. Partnership Working

8.1. WSHL will work closely with a number of other agencies to obtain the desired outcome for victims of domestic abuse; these include but are not exclusively:

- Police;
- Other landlords;
- Local Authorities;
- Specialist Support agencies;
- Victim Support;
- Any relevant Community Safety partnership group that are in place within the areas that we have properties;
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

9. Housing Options

9.1. In the event that the victim requests a transfer with WSHL, having stated that she/he no longer feels safe at that address, WSHL will endeavour to find suitable alternative accommodation within its own housing stock based on advice given by Police and other agencies involved in the case.

- 9.2. In the event WSHL is unable to facilitate a transfer to another WSHL property, we will seek as far as possible to work with these agencies to ensure the tenant is well supported and offered appropriate accommodation, where necessary.
- 9.3. Local Authorities have a legal obligation to re-house anyone made homeless as a result of actual or threatened violence within the home, providing they meet the set criteria (priority homeless).
- 9.4. We will consider contributing or supporting the cost of the victim moving. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and at the discretion of the Managing Director.

10. Action Against the Perpetrator

- 10.1. To prevent the continuation of the domestic abuse, WSHL will seek to protect and support the victim by offering advice and assistance in accessing legal remedies specifically designed to deal with domestic abuse, for example, Non-Molestation Order, Occupation Order, Injunction etc. In addition, WSHL will make referrals where necessary and with the consent of the victim to specialist support services such as the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV), Woman's Aid, and other localised domestic abuse services.

11. Reasonable Adjustments

- 11.1. WSHL will engage with the victim and/or witness to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where necessary to allow tenants to report incidents, receive support, and engage in the investigation process. Adjustments might include procedural modifications, providing information in accessible formats, or signpost to external support.
- 11.2. WSHL will also provide clear, accessible methods for victims and/or witnesses to report incidents of domestic abuse, including multiple reporting channels such as in-person, phone, or email.

12. Responsibilities

- 12.1. Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Head of Housing.
- 12.2. Managers across the organisation have a responsibility to ensure that all colleagues are made aware of WSHL's approach to managing reports of domestic abuse.
- 12.3. Cases of domestic abuse will be managed by the Housing team under the supervision of the Housing Manager and the Head of Housing.
- 12.4. All colleagues have a responsibility to act in accordance with this policy at all times.

13. Other documents

13.1. This policy is linked to the following documents, and they should be read in conjunction:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

14. Policy review

14.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, operational requirements, or customer feedback.

14.2. The number of reported cases of domestic abuse will be reported to the Board annually.