

TITLE	Domestic Abuse policy
Version:	
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Approved by:	WM Housing Group Board – February 2010

This Policy relates to WM Housing Group's approach to dealing with Domestic Abuse.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Domestic Abuse is a serious breach of WM Housing Group's (The Group) conditions of tenancy. The Group recognises that domestic abuse can occur between heterosexual, or gay and lesbian partners or by family members who may not always live in the same household.

Domestic Abuse is any violent or abusive behaviour, whether physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial or verbal, which is used by one person to control and dominate another with whom they have or have had an intimate family type relationship.

This policy gives consideration to:

- Assisting and supporting any person suffering from or threatened with domestic abuse
- Taking action against the perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Supporting the victim to either stay in their home or seek alternative accommodation
- Working with partner agencies

2. Policy Purpose and Aims:

- 2.1 The Group's vision is to create places where people are proud to live and work. To achieve this we must create sustainable communities where our customers and their families enjoy a quality of life free from crime and Anti Social Behaviour (of which domestic violence and abuse is a category), and that where such issues occur we will deal with them effectively, where necessary working with our partners to achieve the best solution for the victim.

This policy outlines the Group's approach to dealing with these issues effectively and in line with our core values:

- Providing excellent services
- Acting with integrity
- Delivering creative solutions
- Valuing People

- 2.2 This policy meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE)

relating to Tenancy and Estate Management and also reflects that the Group is signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

3. Our Policy

- 3.1 The Group believes that none of its customers should live in fear of domestic abuse from a spouse or partner or by any family member whether living in the same household or not. We will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with domestic abuse.

The Group will work with partner agencies to support the victim, aiming firstly for the victim to be able to remain in their home if this is what the victim wishes e.g. The Staying Put Project or Sanctuary Schemes. In addition, we will work with perpetrators and families requiring support where access to specific services and projects are available, e.g. Family Intervention Projects (FIP). It should be noted that access to such services does depend on local availability. The Group will ensure that information on specialist agencies is passed on to victims and will work with partner agencies to support them.

In some local Association offices staff are trained to assist when victims are not ready to report injuries and or damage to their property. In these cases photographs can be taken by trained staff of the Visual Evidence for Victims Scheme (VEV) which can be stored securely and used as evidence at a later date if the victim requires.

The Group will take action to evict the perpetrators of domestic abuse using the powers available to it under the Housing Act 1996, and subject to the wishes of the victim. If the victim is unable to remain in his or her home, we will assist the victim by helping them seek alternative accommodation. If the Group is unable to offer an Emergency Transfer within four weeks of the request, support will be given to make a homeless application.

The Group will assess and treat each case individually. The victim will be treated with respect and their case handled sensitively. We will assess with the victim and partner agencies the most appropriate course of action and obtain their full consent before taking any action.

The Group will work closely with partner agencies to ensure the victim is fully supported and emergency accommodation is made available if there is significant risk of harm or threat to life.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 WM Housing Group is committed to equal opportunities and values diversity. We will work to ensure that in all cases the application of this policy is fair and transparent irrespective of race, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

An Equality Impact Assessment of this policy has been carried out and, although there were no specific barriers identified that may affect customers accessing this policy, or our services in this area; cases of domestic abuse will need to be handled with sensitivity to the individuals and issues concerned.

5. Performance Measures and Targets

5.1 We will monitor performance by regular review of the following:

- Number of cases responded to within the timescales outlined in local procedures and number of exceptions.
- Seeking feedback from reporters following closure of cases about their satisfaction with resolution and support provided.
- Reviewing complaints received from reporters about the handling of the case.

Performance will be measured on a bi-monthly basis.

Performance will be regularly reported to the relevant Customer Panels and partner Association Boards, with an annual summary provided to Group Board.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, unless legislation or sector developments require otherwise, ensuring that it continues to meet its objectives and take account of good practice developments.

We will consult with our customers on any review of this Policy and demonstrate how their views have influenced the process.

7. Responsibility

7.1 This effective implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Housing.

8.0 Associated Documents/Policies

8.1 List of documents/associated policies/publications.

- Customer Care Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and procedure
- Staff guidance on dealing with Domestic Abuse
- Staff awareness on Domestic Abuse
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Audit Commission Tenancy and Estate Management Key Line of Enquiry
- Respect Standard for Housing Management
- Data Protection Policy
- Lettings Management Policy (Emergency Transfers)
- Domestic Abuse leaflet
- Visual Evidence for Victims (VEV) leaflet