

RESIDENT DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Responsible Officer

Director of Customer Services

Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to set out how Phoenix will aim to minimise the risk of harm to residents (and their children) experiencing domestic abuse. We are committed to taking action to deal with all incidents of domestic abuse and offer support. It also sets out how we will work with other specialist agencies and partners to try to ensure the ongoing safety of victims/survivors of domestic abuse tailored to their individual needs.

Domestic abuse can be reported by telephone, email, in person, or in writing.

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and our staff are trained to identify the signs and respond to reports of domestic abuse. We will always treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgmental way.

We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will hold perpetrators of abuse to account. Our approach is centred around the needs of the survivor and we will always take into account their views when deciding on appropriate actions to take.

Reducing Violence against Women and Girls is one of the strategic priorities for the Safer Lewisham Partnership and as a registered housing provider within Lewisham Phoenix has a responsibility to help achieve that aim.

Policy Scope

This policy sets out Phoenix's approach to responding to domestic abuse and applies to all residents. There is a separate Domestic Abuse policy for staff.

We believe that nobody should live in fear of violence or abuse. We will take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and provide support tailored to the needs of the individual working with specialised agencies.

Domestic abuse is experienced by women and men, within heterosexual and same sex relationships, and between family members. However, all evidence shows that women are far more likely to be the victims, to be subjected to repeat violence, suffer serious injury and to be fearful about further abuse. Whilst this policy applies equally to both men and women, the particular issues for women suffering ongoing abuse are specifically recognised and this is occasionally reflected in the language used.

The Policy

Within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and this policy, domestic abuse is defined as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;

- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse;
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

This definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Within this definition, economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to do either of the following:

- Acquire, use or maintain money or other property;
- Obtain goods or services;

It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected. Personally connected is defined in the act as people who:

- are married to each other;
- are civil partners of each other;
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place);
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place);
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children;
- are relatives.

Children aged under 18 are also recognised as survivors in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator.

Our approach to victims/survivors

Phoenix is victims/survivor centred and will take a believing approach to all reports of domestic abuse. We will treat people experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way.

Domestic abuse can be reported by telephone, by email, in person or in writing. We will provide interpreters and translating information in other languages or formats as needed.

All cases of domestic abuse will be managed by the Housing Management team who are trained and experienced in dealing sensitively and appropriately with victims/survivors. We will contact all victims/survivors within 24 hours of the first report and use a private room if the meeting is in person.

We will also offer telephone and remote appointments based on the choice of the victim/survivor. We will provide a sensitive and confidential response. We will provide a staff member suitable to the victim/survivor and we will accommodate gender specific requests. We will agree with the victim/survivor the method of contact they prefer to use.

All residents reporting domestic abuse will have a CAADA DASH 2009 risk model (which is a UK wide accredited form used by PCH and partner organisations to plan how the victim/survivor and any children will be supported) risk assessment carried out which will allow the Housing officer to work collaboratively with the victim/survivor on the response that is required. If there is a high score then the case will be referred to MARAC.

We will share information between agencies where the assessment against the DASH Risk Identification Checklist meets the local authority threshold for MARAC referrals. This information will only be shared with those agencies attending the meeting.

If there has not been an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) involved in the case previously we will refer and/or signpost victim/survivor for specialist support with their consent.

Our approach is survivor-centred and we will take into account their views and ongoing safety when deciding the most appropriate course of action. We will make sure the survivor is aware of our response and that they agree any actions. Safety in a domestic abuse situation can often include a need to move from the home; all available options will be discussed with the victim/survivor. Where temporary accommodation is required we will refer to Lewisham Council. We will also carry out an assessment for extra security measures where required.

We will keep all cases involving domestic abuse under review until the survivor is ready for the case to be closed. Phoenix is committed to safeguarding and will not tolerate any form of abuse. We have a duty to ensure that action is taken if any of our staff, contractors, partners or volunteers have any concerns that an adult, child or young person is at risk of significant harm or abuse. More information is available in our safeguarding policies and procedures.

Our approach to perpetrators

We will take appropriate enforcement action against perpetrators in cases where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual, and we will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken. We will be clear that domestic abuse is never the fault of the survivor or their children.

Working in Partnership

We are committed to continuously improving our response to domestic abuse and work closely with partners at Lewisham Council, the police and Domestic Abuse Advocacy services. We will share information through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Metropolitan Police.

We will take into account each person's circumstances and the different actions that may be possible and appropriate.

We will keep an up to date list of local and national agencies that may be able to offer support and advice to individuals [Domestic abuse | Phoenix Community Housing \(phoenixch.org.uk\)](#)

We will refer to our Financial Wellbeing team or other relevant agency for support around financial issues and signpost to other organisations for legal advice.

We will work in partnership with appropriate agencies to support or signpost perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and want to change their behaviour.

We will respect our residents right to privacy in line with our Data Protection Policy.

When working with other organisations we may need to share some information about the case and the individual. We'll only share information with the survivor's permission, unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of children or a vulnerable adult and it is a duty of care. In addition, agencies such as the police may request personal data about our customers as part of their own ongoing investigation. In these cases, the Housing Manager will assess the sharing of data on a case-by-case basis, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

Awareness of Domestic Abuse

We'll widely publicise information to raise awareness about domestic abuse, telling our customers how to get help if they need it and the type of response they can expect from us. We'll tell residents about the support we provide around domestic abuse when they move into their home. We'll also support national campaigns to increase awareness.

We'll carry out a rolling programme of employee training to make sure domestic abuse is always at the forefront of our minds. Our employees are trained to spot signs of domestic abuse when working in homes or having conversations with customers. They are aware of how to act and report any concerns confidently and sensitively, such as through our Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy.

Feedback

We value the views of our customers and ask for feedback about the service we provide. We'll do this in a number of different ways, including through working groups and informal conversations which will include those with lived experience of domestic abuse.

We'll listen to feedback and use it to improve the way in which we work when dealing with domestic abuse.

Equalities Considerations

We have completed an equality impact assessment for this policy.

We will make sure our services are accessible. This includes providing a variety of ways to report domestic abuse and arranging interpreters and translating information into other languages or formats as needed. This is to make sure that we do not create additional barriers and that everyone can access our service in the way they need.

We recognise that survivors' experiences of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background, for example, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnic group or immigration status. We will recognise this intersectionality and understand that certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We will consider the individual needs of each survivor when tailoring our approach.

Although domestic abuse can affect anyone, certain people may be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups are affected by specific forms of domestic abuse. We also understand there are cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We'll take all of this into account in the support we provide.

We will train employees to understand how domestic abuse differently affects individuals and work in partnership with specialist providers to take action and make sure survivors get the right support. We will partner with and support local organisations with all relevant experience and understanding in order to better support survivors' needs.

Monitoring and review

We assess how our services meet the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance standards and use this assessment to review and improve our services and aim to achieve accreditation.

We will also monitor the delivery of the service to our residents who report domestic abuse through case management and reporting the number of cases opened in monthly key performance indicators.

We will review this policy every three years or sooner if there are changes to legislation or best practice.

Legislation & Regulation

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024

Reference to other documents and associated policies and procedures

Including:

- Tenancy Agreement
- Safeguarding Policy

- Lewisham Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-2026
- Eviction Policy
- Rent Arrears Policy
- Recharge Policy

Definitions

Term/acronym	Description
Resident	Includes tenants, freeholders and lessees.
Phoenix	Phoenix Community Housing.
v/s	Victim/Survivor.
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference.
CAADA-DASH	Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse – Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Honour based violence risk assessment.
DAA	Domestic Abuse Advocate.

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