

Domestic Abuse and VAWG policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines our approach to dealing with Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- 1.2 This policy details the principles for providing assistance and taking action in cases of domestic abuse or VAWG. Further information can be found in the associated guidance and procedures.
- 1.3 This policy aims to ensure that those who have experienced domestic abuse are supported in a sympathetic and sensitive way, in accordance with their needs. It aims to ensure all colleagues act in a non-judgemental way.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies where applicable:
 - Safeguarding Adults Policy
 - Safeguarding Children Policy
 - Antisocial Behaviour Policy
 - Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) guidance
 - Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy
 - Lone Working Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Rehousing Policy
 - Mutual Exchange Policy
 - Lettings Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Peabody Group residents and household members including shared owners and leaseholders.
- 2.2 Some adults who are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG may also require safeguarding, for example where there are additional vulnerabilities such as a disability. In such cases, a referral will be made to Adult Services. Children living in a household with domestic abuse will always require safeguarding and will be referred to Children's Services in all cases. Our approach to safeguarding aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and children who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse or neglect.
- 2.3 Where colleagues are experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG, we will follow our Domestic Abuse in the Workplace policy

3. Key terms and definitions

- 3.1 The term **Violence Against Women and Girls** (VAWG) refers to the following range of serious crime types which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls: Domestic Violence and Abuse; Sexual Offences; Stalking; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour'; Forced Marriage; Prostitution; and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation. A full definition is provided in the VAWG guidance note.
- 3.2 Where a customer is assessed to be at high risk of serious harm or homicide, we will refer their case to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARAC is a non-

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statutory, multi-agency meeting where information is shared and coordinated action plans created.

3.3 **Domestic abuse** is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are “personally connected” to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse. Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

This includes incidences where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child). Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone’s ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

4. Our approach

- 4.1 Peabody will ensure customers are able to report domestic abuse or VAWG to us through a variety of methods, and we will investigate all reports that we receive. We will respond to reports within one working day.
- 4.2 We will ensure that our employees receive specialist training at the appropriate level on domestic abuse.
- 4.3 While women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of VAWG, and some are gender specific such as FGM, we will support those individuals experiencing VAWG or domestic abuse irrespective of age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act.
- 4.4 We will work with our partners to support individuals experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG and, where appropriate, take action against perpetrators where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing abuse.
- 4.5 We take a customer centred approach when working with individuals, family members and representatives, to support and assess their circumstances and recognise the confidentiality of all the individuals concerned. However, the safety of the individual is paramount. Where an incident or offence is witnessed by a Peabody colleague, they will immediately call the police. Where high risk of serious harm or homicide is identified, we will share relevant and proportionate information with statutory and non-statutory services to minimise that risk.
- 4.6 At our first point of contact, we will aim to carry out a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist and will co-create an action plan to provide support for the person experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG, their children and anyone else deemed to be at risk.
- 4.7 We will share information with other agencies in accordance with the Data Protection Act and UK-GDPR. This may mean sharing relevant and proportionate information without the customer’s consent, where appropriate.
- 4.8 Where necessary, we will arrange, or attend, multi-agency meetings to ensure support is offered by all relevant agencies.

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- 4.9 People experiencing abuse will be able to speak to a member of staff of the same sex and, where possible, of the same ethnic origin if requested. Where necessary, we will provide translation services.
- 4.10 People experiencing abuse will be able to meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue. At the first point of contact, we will also agree the safe method and time of contact the individual wishes us to use.
- 4.11 In the case of joint tenancies, it should be noted that the perpetrator has the right of access to the tenancy file. Measures such as logging these cases as anonymous so that they are not associated with the tenancy and redacting confidential information will be taken to ensure that this is not seen by the perpetrator, or anyone representing the perpetrator.
- 4.12 We will provide improved security to a resident's home in conjunction with partner agencies, where required; this is in line with our Sanctuary Scheme service or subsidiary equivalent.
- 4.13 We will make a referral to our welfare benefit and money advice team or other relevant internal teams for any required support relating to financial issues.
- 4.14 We will signpost the individual experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG to relevant organisations to provide legal advice as appropriate.
- 4.15 We will refer people experiencing domestic abuse or VAWG to external agencies who can offer further advice and support dependent upon their needs, using specialist 'by and for' services where appropriate.
- 4.16 We will take action (where evidence is available) against anyone responsible for domestic abuse or VAWG. This will only be done 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.
- 4.17 We will report incidents to the police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so (with their permission), where they feel too intimidated to report incidents themselves. We will also offer third party reporting services if requested.
- 4.18 Where emergency temporary accommodation is needed, we will support the person experiencing abuse to approach the Homeless Person's Unit of their choice. This can also involve referral to refuges via the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 5.1 We value diversity and promote equality, ensuring people are treated accordingly to their individual needs. This ensures that no person or other organisation is discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy, unrelated criminal activities, illness or any other matter that may cause a person to be treated with prejudice.
- 5.2 We will endeavour to ensure that services are delivered fairly and equally to all and to the highest possible standard. We provide all customers, prospective customers and other stakeholders with the information they require, in a format to meet their individual needs, using clear language which is easy to understand.
- 5.3 EqIA has been completed and should be referenced here

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6. Legislation and Regulation

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Housing Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1 The Managing Directors of all regions have overall responsibility for delivery and compliance with the policy.

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Approval

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Policy owner	Managing Director North West London