

Policy	Domestic Abuse Policy
Policy Ref:	PHL POL 36
Approved by:	PHL Board
Date Approved	10 October 2024
Updated	First Issue
Review Date	10 October 2026
Lead Officer/post	Extra Care Operations Manager

1. Purpose of the Policy

Perpetrators of domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on the lives of their victims and their actions can result in injury, trauma and potentially death. The policy applies to anyone living in our properties or receiving a service from us.

Preferred Homes (PHL) believe that domestic abuse presents one of the highest risks to personal safety and is unacceptable, we will therefore take the strongest action possible against perpetrators of domestic abuse where we have the power to do so and with the consent of the victim.

This policy sets out how PHL will respond to anyone suffering from domestic abuse and the key principles that underpin our response. The policy also sets out how we will hold perpetrators to account. It recognises the need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies with greater experience of domestic abuse in order to reduce the risk of harm to survivor.

2. Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Improve the safety and wellbeing of our residents by recognising that domestic abuse is a serious crime which has an adverse impact on the health of individuals, families and communities.
- Ensure we take a victim-centred and robust approach to tackling domestic abuse.
- Actively promote increased awareness and understanding of this issue amongst residents and employees.
- Prevent further incidents by responding as high priority to all reports.
- Improve the response to victims through effective engagement of appropriate external enforcement and support agencies.
- Ensure specialist training is provided to staff that deal with domestic abuse

Create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse feel they can approach us, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.

We will work with relevant external agencies, share information appropriately and in line with GDPR and our data sharing protocols. We will work with survivors ensuring we stay focused on their individual needs and the needs of their family/ household.

3. Scope

This document should be used by employees, contractors and volunteers of PHL to understand how PHL should respond to disclosures or incidents of domestic abuse relating to those living in our properties or receiving a service from us.

4. Key Terms and Definitions

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is:

Behaviour of a person towards another person is domestic abuse if they are both aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—

- they are, or have been, married to each other.
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other.
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated).
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated).
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- they are relatives.

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

- **Physical Abuse** including violent behaviour -can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, spitting, strangulation, choking.
- **Sexual Abuse** can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.
- **Financial Abuse** can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim’s name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow them to study or work.
- **Psychological and Emotional Abuse**: Violence and Abuse has a profound impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with little confidence that they can do anything to change the situation.
- **Discriminatory Abuse**: This type of abuse is motivated by an oppressive and discriminatory attitude towards a person’s: Disability, Physical appearance, Learning disability, Mental ill health, Sensory impairment, Race, Religion, Gender/gender identity, Age, Culture, Sexual orientation, Appearance.
- The Definition also includes modern day slavery, coercive behaviour, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

5. Policy

There are a number of ways that we might receive a report of domestic abuse taking place in one of our properties. It may be made by the individual experiencing the abuse, a member of the household or by a concerned neighbour, relative, or the police.

Suspected cases may be brought to our attention by repeat repairs or damage being caused to the property, reports of loud noise, banging and shouting or a member of staff noticing a change in the behaviour or appearance of a resident.

We treat all reports of domestic abuse seriously and in confidence. All cases of domestic abuse are different, and depending on the situation, staff will respond accordingly. It might be that more information is needed, especially where it has been brought to our attention by a third party.

When an individual experiencing domestic abuse discloses this information to a member of staff, we will:

- Ask them if they are in immediate danger, if there is immediate threat to life, staff will encourage the individual to call the police, or call the police on their behalf.
- Encourage the victim to disclose the name of the perpetrator and their relationship to the individual.
- If there is a safeguarding concern of an adult at risk or a child at risk living in the property where the domestic abuse is taking place, staff have a duty of care to raise this concern with the Local Authority.
- Advise the victim of local and national support agencies, and where they can find more information on agencies that can help them.
- Support the investigation of domestic abuse where the prime responsibility and power to lead an investigation lies with another service, such as the Police or the Local Authority and take necessary action as requested.
- Find out the safest way to contact the victim going forwards

We provide general housing advice to perpetrators when requested.

6. Equality Diversity and Inclusion

The policy complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure equality of treatment for all customers without discrimination or prejudice. Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone, including those with protected characteristics and males.

Issues around diversity been considered around access to and delivery of any services covered by the Policy. An EIA has been undertaken on this Policy. On request, PHL will provide translations of all its documents, policies and procedures in various languages and other accessible formats.

7. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) values and principles

PHL is committed to the values and principles of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. These are integral to and underpin our approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

8. Risk Management

Responding appropriately to domestic abuse is a key responsibility for housing, care and support providers. We understand the risks posed to customers due to domestic abuse and PHL will seek to mitigate risk through this policy.

When responding to any incident, we take a risk-based view to the actions being taken to ensure that the most appropriate action is taken, and the welfare and safety of customers and staff are at the forefront. This is also reflected in any Safeguarding risk which is identified and managed through the Group Risk Management Framework.

9. Legislation and Regulation

The Housing Act 1996

The Family Law Act 1996

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Human Rights Act 1998

The Data Protection Act 2018

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

Police and Justice Act 2006

The Equality Act 2010

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Regulator of Social Housing – Consumer standards 2024

10. Data Protection

It is recognised that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for survivors to report and PHL shall maintain the confidentiality of a disclosure regarding violence to the extent allowed by law and unless to do so would result in significant risk of harm to any person on any cases that are reported.

PHL will however, share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, MARAC and other groups where necessary, to deal with cases more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the survivor and/or their dependants to provide better or more effective support. The principles of UK GDPR and PHL Data Protection Policy will apply to this Police.

11. Review and updates to this policy

PHL will review and update this policy in accordance with its legal obligations and may amend, update or supplement it from time to time and at least every 3 years or earlier, if required by changes in legislation or technology underlying its document management system

