

RAILWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

POLICY STATEMENT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. Statement of Intent

1.1 The Association is committed to the rights of every person to live without fear of violence and abuse. Domestic violence is a serious crime and has a devastating effect on the people who suffer from it. Therefore, the Association will take prompt and effective action.

1.2 The Association will take a victim centred approach and respect the wishes of the victim at all stages. Their safety is paramount and they will be treated sensitively, courteously and respectfully.

1.3 This policy will be implemented in accordance with the Association's Equality and Diversity policy.

2. Definition

2.1 Domestic violence is defined by the Home Office as –

“...any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

2.2 Domestic violence occurs across society regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography. It is about one person having power and control over another person. It can be actual, attempted or threatened and typically involves a pattern of abuse and intimidation which escalates in frequency and severity over time. Domestic violence covers a range of situations, which may include: -

- Physical violence– slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing
- Sexual violence – rape and non consensual sex acts
- Emotional or psychological violence – intimidation, isolation from friends and relatives, verbal abuse, humiliation, threat of violence, destruction of belongings, threat of legal sanctions such as custody of children or deportation, systematic criticism and belittling.
- Financial abuse – withholding money

2.3 Domestic violence is a criminal offence and a form of anti-social behaviour.

3. Implementation

3.1 The Association's tenancy agreement clearly states in Clause 3 (6) that tenants must not cause or permit any form of harassment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disability, in their homes or within the locality of their home.

3.2 The Association will take all reports of domestic violence very seriously. We aim to provide effective support for all victims and to take appropriate action against alleged perpetrators.

3.3 We will: -

- Provide advice and support to anyone experiencing domestic violence regardless of their age, gender, race or sexuality
- Try to ensure that victims of domestic violence are interviewed by officers of the same sex
- Arrange an interpreter and translator, on request.
- Act promptly to investigate all complaints of domestic violence, agree an appropriate course of action with the victim and work with other agencies to fully investigate and deal with each case.
- Encourage victims to accept help from appropriate agencies that can provide dedicated support, assistance and advice
- Not ask victims to prove that they have experienced violence
- Make immediate referrals to the local Council's homelessness service if victims feel unable to return to their homes and do not have suitable alternative accommodation.
- Provide practical support such as additional safety and security improvements (for example, door locks, spy holes and alarms) to Association properties to protect victims from further violence or abuse.
- Consider offering victims a priority transfer to alternative accommodation, if appropriate. This would be to properties that are not within the vicinity of their current homes.
- Encourage victims to report incidents of domestic violence to the Police
- Take firm action against perpetrators of domestic violence or support the victim and/or other agencies to take appropriate action. This may include injunctions, prosecution for criminal offences, re-possession of tenancy and removal of illegal occupants. However, when deciding on appropriate action, consideration will be given to the wishes and safety of the victim.
- Have awareness of local agencies, services and multi agency forums so that there is a source of information, advice and support for the victim and/or assistance with the investigation of the domestic violence.
- Publicise our policy on domestic violence to raise awareness and understanding amongst residents of our approach to responding to victims and perpetrators

3.4 The provision of appropriate security measures, repairing damage and the removal of graffiti to Association properties will be undertaken promptly.

3.5 A perpetrator of domestic violence who is responsible for deliberate damage to Association owned property may be recharged the full cost of the damage.

3.6 All complaints and information will be treated as confidential. This will not be shared with other parties, or a victim's identity made known to another party, without their consent. However, information may be shared with a statutory agency such as the Police if this may help to prevent or detect a crime or serious incident or if there is a child protection issue.

3.7 A victim satisfaction survey will be carried out to find out if the victim was satisfied with the action taken by the Association, if there are ways in which the Association's response could be improved and to check that there have not been any further incidents.

4. Training

4.1 Staff will receive appropriate training to equip them to implement this policy effectively. However, because of the low level and infrequency of incidents and complaints, the Association may utilise the expertise of specialists from the relevant local authority, another locally based social landlord or domestic violence agency in order to respond effectively.

5. Responsibility

5.1 The Director of Housing Services is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

6. Monitoring

6.1 All complaints of domestic violence will be reported to the next Housing Services Sub Committee. The reports will be anonymous and will not identify the victims or perpetrators.

7. Review

7.1 This policy will be reviewed biennially, in consultation with residents.

This policy applies to the beneficiaries of Joseph Hornby Stockdale Almshouses.

July 2010

**This policy can be made available on request in other languages, large type,
Braille or in audio format**