

Domestic Abuse

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Author	
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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Railway Housing Association (Railway) is committed to providing safe homes and communities where residents feel protected from harm. We recognise domestic abuse as a serious issue that can have a profound and long-term impact on victims, families and communities.
- 1.2 Railway takes a resident-centred, trauma-informed approach to preventing, identifying and responding to domestic abuse. We prioritise the safety, wellbeing and wishes of the person experiencing abuse and ensure that every case is handled sensitively, confidentially and appropriately.
- 1.3 We know that tackling domestic abuse requires partnership working. We work proactively with statutory and specialist agencies to protect victims, prevent harm, safeguard children and adults at risk and take appropriate action against perpetrators.

2. Policy Aims

Railway Housing Association is committed to delivering a domestic abuse service that is trusted, accessible, safe, and effective.

- 2.1 We will:
- Deliver a victim-centred domestic abuse service
 - Ensure residents feel heard, supported and safe
 - Provide clear, accessible ways to report domestic abuse
 - Offer regular updates, safety planning and tailored support
 - Act promptly, proportionately and effectively:
 - Assess risk and respond quickly to all reports of domestic abuse
 - Complete formal risk assessment and safety plan
 - Take swift and proportionate action to reduce harm and prevent escalation
 - Meet Legal and Regulatory Requirements:
 - Comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Housing Act 1996, Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989 and all other relevant legislation
 - Deliver services in line with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards, including:

- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Tenancy Standard
 - Safety and Quality Standard
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
 - Handle complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
 - Protect victims and take appropriate action against perpetrators:
 - Provide support and safeguarding referrals for victims and households
 - Use tenancy enforcement or legal tools where necessary to manage perpetrator behaviour
 - Prevent homelessness and support tenancy sustainment for victims
 - Work in partnership:
 - Promote the understanding of domestic abuse among residents and colleagues
 - Offer training for colleagues on identifying and responding to domestic abuse
 - Embed early intervention and support
 - Continuously Improve Our Service:
 - Monitor outcomes, performance and learning from residents
 - Involve residents in shaping services
 - Review this policy at least every three years
- 2.2 Railway Housing Association recognises that language plays an important role in shaping how residents experience our services. We are committed to using neutral, person-centred terminology wherever possible to ensure fairness, avoid pre-judgement and support a respectful approach to all parties involved. For this reason, terms such as "*reporting resident*" and "*alleged perpetrator*" are normally used during case management.
- 2.3 However, we also acknowledge that some terms, such as "*victim*" and "*perpetrator*", hold important legal, safeguarding and sector-recognised meanings. Although these words may not always feel resident-friendly, they are sometimes necessary and appropriate.
- 2.4 We use these terms carefully, proportionately and only where they ensure legal clarity, safeguarding responsibilities or effective partnership working. In every case, our priority is to respect the experiences of residents, minimise harm and provide a safe, trauma-informed service. Wherever possible, we will continue to adopt language that is sensitive, neutral and person-centred while still meeting our legal, regulatory and safeguarding obligations.
- 3. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 3.1 The Railway Board have overall responsibility to ensure an effective domestic abuse policy that meets all regulatory requirements is in place. The Board will approve the

domestic abuse policy and ensure a review of the policy is carried out every 3-years, or sooner if there is a significant change that may impact delivery of the service.

- 3.2 The Chief Operating Officer will ensure residents of Railway have the opportunity to influence the domestic abuse policy at the point of the 3-year review and throughout delivery of the policy and supporting procedure.
- 3.3 The Resident Committee will monitor the delivery of the domestic abuse policy and implementation of the policy through an annual Safer Communities deep dive.

4. Legislative Framework

- 4.1 Railway Housing Association's domestic abuse approach is influenced by legislation and guidance, including:

Legislation	Why it is Relevant	Regulatory Link
Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Provides the statutory definition of domestic abuse and gives victims stronger rights, including priority housing status and protection orders.	Supports the Neighbourhood and Community Standard; safeguarding expectations; victim support obligations.
Housing Act 1996	Places duties on housing providers regarding homelessness prevention and allocations for victims of domestic abuse.	Links to Tenancy Standard and fair access to housing.
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Strengthens duties to prevent homelessness for victims fleeing domestic abuse.	Supports Tenancy Standard – preventing homelessness.
Care Act 2014	Establishes safeguarding responsibilities for adults at risk, including those experiencing domestic abuse.	Supports Safety and Quality Standard.
Children Act 1989 / 2004	Sets out safeguarding duties to protect children affected by domestic abuse.	Supports all consumer standards – protection of children and family wellbeing.
Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	Provides tools for managing perpetrator behaviour, such as injunctions and closure powers.	Supports neighbourhood safety and community protection.
Human Rights Act 1998	Requires decision-making to be fair, proportionate and protective of residents' rights.	Underpins fairness and accountability expectations.
Equality Act 2010	Ensures non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments for victims with protected characteristics.	Supports the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.
Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR	Regulates lawful and proportionate information sharing.	Supports transparency, privacy and accountability.

5. Definitions

- 5.1 Railway adopts the statutory definition of domestic abuse from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which includes:
- Physical abuse – pushing, slapping, hitting, stabbing or attempted murder
 - Sexual abuse – using force, threats or intimidation to make a victim perform sexual acts, rape and non-consensual acts of sex
 - Threatening behaviour – name calling, humiliation, degradation, accusing, verbally threatening
 - Controlling behaviour – can involve a range of acts designed to make a person isolated from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour
 - Coercive behaviour – an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten a person
 - Economic abuse – controlling money and bank accounts, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how money is spent
 - Psychological, emotional or other abuse – creating isolation, excessively checking up on people and monitoring their whereabouts, including the use of social media, using physical size to intimidate, humiliating and undermining behaviour, gas lighting, constant criticising and putting them down or blaming them for abuse
- 5.2 Domestic abuse can occur between people aged 16 or over who are “personally connected,” including partners, ex-partners, spouses, family members and those sharing a parental relationship.
- 5.3 Abuse can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour. It can occur in any household or community and victims may be of any gender, sexuality, age, background or ability.
- 5.4 Children are victims in their own right where they see, hear or experience domestic abuse.

6. Our Standards of Service

- 6.1 Reports of domestic abuse can be made to Railway Housing Association through any contact method that is most convenient and appropriate to the resident's preferences and needs.
- 6.2 We will acknowledge and assess all new reports of domestic abuse within 1 working day.
- 6.3 When a report of domestic abuse is received, a case will be opened and a safety action plan agreed with the reporting resident.
- 6.4 While the case remains open, the reporting resident will be updated within 10 working days (unless an alternative arrangement is agreed) to provide updates and receive feedback. We recognise however that in some cases regular contact may increase the risk and therefore individual arrangements may be made to support the resident.

- 6.5 All reports and records of domestic abuse will be treated as confidential. We will seek the resident's consent before sharing any information with third parties, except where disclosure is necessary to protect someone from harm.
- 6.6 Where there are safeguarding concerns, or we believe someone may be at risk, we will share information in line with data protection requirements and relevant safeguarding principles, ensuring that any action taken is lawful, proportionate and in the best interests of those involved.
- 6.7 We will seek the consent of the resident(s) and any relevant multi-agency partnership by domestic abuse before closing a case.

7. Identifying and Assessing Risk

- 7.1 Railway will:
- Use recognised risk assessment tools, including Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based violence risk assessment
 - Refer high risk cases to the relevant local authority's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), which is the statutory partnership for managing domestic abuse risk
 - Consider the safety of children and vulnerable adults and make the appropriate safeguarding referrals
 - Work with partners to manage immediate risk

8. Partnership Approach

- 8.1 Railway will work collaboratively with a range of agencies to support residents, minimise risk, tackle domestic abuse and support perpetrators to change their behaviour. Some of these agencies include:
- Police and emergency services
 - Local authority safeguarding teams
 - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
 - Health and mental health services
 - Specialist domestic abuse charities
 - Housing providers
 - Legal services

- 8.2 This approach aligns with the Regulator of Social Housing's Shared Spaces expectations and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

9. Preventing, tackling and resolving domestic abuse

- 9.1 Railway Housing Association is committed to prompt, appropriate and proportionate action to deter and tackle domestic abuse and to keep residents safe. Our approach combines prevention, intervention, support and enforcement to protect residents and maintain safe, well-managed communities.

Our Approach:

- Early identification and intervention
- Trauma-informed support
- Safety planning and emergency measures
- Flexible tenancy management and transfers where appropriate
- Enforcement action against perpetrators
- Specialist referrals and ongoing support after case closure

Through this multi-faceted approach, Railway Housing Association seeks to reduce domestic abuse and the impact of domestic abuse, protect residents and maintain safe and inclusive neighbourhoods, while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and best practice standards.

10. Enforcement and Legal Remedies

10.1 Railway Housing Association uses a range of tools take enforcement action to protect residents. We also recognise that in some cases it will be more appropriate to work in partnership with another organisation where the individual circumstances mean that a partner organisation has more effective tools and powers.

10.2 Available Legal Remedies:

- Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP): Informs a resident that we intend to seek possession of their home due to a tenancy breach.
- Injunctions: Court orders that prohibit or require certain actions. May include arrest powers and are often used as immediate measures.
- Possession Proceedings: The ultimate sanction for tenancy breaches.

10.3 This approach ensures that all tools and legal measures are used responsibly, proportionately and in line with best practice.

11. Adapting Services to Achieve Equitable Outcomes

11.1 Railway Housing Association is committed to delivering services in a way that achieves equitable outcomes for all residents. We recognise that individuals experience domestic abuse differently and may face barriers to accessing services or engaging with processes. Equity means providing the right level of support, in the right way, at the right time, so that all residents have a fair opportunity to feel safe and have their concerns addressed. We will adapt our approach to meet the diverse needs of residents, ensuring that no one is disadvantaged due to their circumstances.

11.2 Our Approach:

- Understanding Individual Needs – we will take reasonable steps to identify vulnerabilities, support needs and personal circumstances at the earliest opportunity, including those related to disability, health, language, culture, digital access or financial hardship.
- Flexible Communication – residents can engage with us in a way that suits them, including telephone, face-to-face, digital or through an advocate. We will provide information in accessible formats (e.g. large print, translation, easy read) where required.

- Tailored Case Management – our response will be proportionate and adapted to reflect the needs of those involved. This may include adjusting timescales, methods of evidence gathering or the way we carry out visits and interviews.
- Supporting Victims – we will take a victim-centred approach, recognising the impact on individuals, while also considering whether those responsible for domestic abuse have underlying support needs. Where appropriate, we will work with partner agencies to provide support alongside enforcement.
- Removing Barriers – we will proactively reduce barriers that may prevent residents from reporting domestic abuse or engaging with us, including offering support to complete forms, providing reassurance around confidentiality and ensuring our processes are clear and transparent.
- Partners – we will collaborate with relevant local agencies to ensure residents receive holistic support tailored to their needs.

11.2 Residents with additional needs may be signposted to external agencies to help keep people safe. We take proactive steps to help residents feel safe in their homes, including security lighting, timely maintenance of communal doors and measures to prevent unauthorised access.

11.3 The safety and wellbeing of all residents, including adults and children, is central to our approach. We follow safeguarding protocols and act where there is suspicion or evidence of abuse. Support may include referrals to external agencies or taking the wishes of residents into account when determining actions related to domestic abuse.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

12.1 Railway Housing Association is committed to promoting equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion (EEDI) in all aspects of our work, including the prevention, management, and resolution of domestic abuse. We recognise that residents have diverse needs, backgrounds and experiences, and we strive to ensure everyone is treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.

12.2 Our Approach:

- Equitable Access: We recognise that providing the same service to everyone does not always achieve fairness. Residents may require different methods of support or reporting to have equal access to our services. For example, we provide translation services, advocacy support, alternative communication channels or tailored approaches to ensure everyone can report domestic abuse effectively.
- Fair Treatment: All reports and interventions are handled consistently and impartially, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected characteristics.
- Inclusive Policies: Our domestic abuse policies, procedures, and communications are designed to be clear, accessible, and inclusive, reflecting the diverse needs of our communities.
- Colleague Training: All colleagues receive regular training on equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as the impacts of domestic abuse, to ensure awareness and competency in responding appropriately.

- Monitoring and Learning: We collect and analyse data on domestic abuse to identify trends, monitor outcomes, and ensure equitable responses. Resident feedback is used to improve services and remove barriers to reporting.

12.3 By embedding equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion principles with a focus on equity, Railway Housing Association ensures that all residents have genuine access to support, feel safe and respected, and can fully engage with services to report domestic abuse.

13. Complaints and Appeals

13.1 If a resident is not satisfied with how their domestic abuse report has been handled, they can raise the matter through Railway Housing Association's complaints process. All complaints will be treated seriously, investigated promptly and responded to in line with our published complaints procedure.

13.2 Our approach follows the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, ensuring that:

- Complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and transparently
- Residents are kept informed of progress and outcomes
- Appropriate remedies or actions are offered where required

13.3 Residents can submit a complaint using any of our usual contact methods, including telephone, email, website or in person. If a resident remains dissatisfied after our internal process, they have the right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman, who can independently review the case.

13.4 This ensures that all residents have access to a fair, transparent, and accountable process if they are unhappy with the way domestic abuse concerns are addressed.