

Domestic Abuse Policy

1. What this policy is about

- 1.1 Domestic abuse is a serious crime which has a devastating impact on people's lives and can affect mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing.
- 1.2 Domestic abuse can be any of the following:
 - Controlling or coercive behaviour
 - Financial abuse
 - Psychological, emotional, or other abuse
 - Physical or sexual abuse
 - Violent or threatening behaviour¹
- 1.3 It doesn't matter whether the behaviour consists of a single or multiple incidents. Both parties must be 16 and over and "personally connected" (married or civil partners; or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other; or have a parental relationship with the child; or are relatives).
- 1.4 This policy applies to anyone living in our homes and sets out how we will help and support any of our customers who have experienced, are experiencing or are at risk of domestic abuse. This includes considering the needs of children and others impacted by the abuse. We understand that our offer to survivors needs to come from a place of understanding, compassion, and respect. We will take into consideration any suggestions of honour-based abuse and manage such instances with understanding and respect.
- 1.5 The policy also sets out action that we will take against perpetrators of domestic abuse and how we will work with partners to support them in holding perpetrators to account.
- 1.6 It recognises the need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies and survivors to reduce the risk of harm.

2. Our approach

- 2.1 Our aim is to support survivors of domestic abuse.
 - Customers can talk to us, and we will agree how we communicate with them to keep them safe.
 - We will listen with compassion and believe their account.
 - We will take a person-centred approach, focused on individual needs and respecting customers' decisions.
 - We will work with customers to assess any risk and agree an appropriate action plan.
 - We will help customers to understand their housing and tenancy options.

- We will tell customers about specialist agencies who can also offer them support and advice.
- We work alongside partners including Police and support agencies to provide a cohesive response.

Disclosures of Domestic Abuse

- 2.2 Customers can tell us about domestic abuse in a variety of ways including face-to-face at a home visit, phone, email, and webchat. When a customer reports domestic abuse to us, we will respond quickly and sensitively. We will always be flexible with our approach to suit customers' needs.
- 2.3 We will meet any access or communication needs that the survivor may have to keep them safe, including translation services, method, and timings of contact, meeting them at a safe location outside their home and the opportunity to speak to a colleague of the same gender.
- 2.4 When a colleague suspects or witnesses domestic abuse taking place in our homes, they must report the incident at the first available opportunity.
- 2.5 We will make appropriate safeguarding referrals where we believe that a child or vulnerable adult is harmed or at risk due to domestic abuse.

Supporting survivors.

- 2.6 When a customer tells us about domestic abuse, we are here to offer support.
- 2.7 Support will be provided regardless of, and informed by, a customer's needs including those arising from any protected characteristics, such as gender, age, sexuality, faith/religion, disability, and race.
- We will work with survivors to provide and/or signpost to financial and mental health and wellbeing support.
 - We will seek best practice advice when supporting customers where a protected characteristic is a factor in the abuse experienced.
 - We will assess the safety of the home and offer additional security measures.
 - We will advise customers about housing options based on individual need. Advice will reflect individual circumstances, tenure, and tenancy type.
 - When a customer moves into one of our homes, we will consider any support needs, including any specific needs for survivors of domestic abuse.
 - We also offer a range of customer support on our website, including 'safe to use' apps.
 - Where it is appropriate and doesn't put the survivor at further risk, we will support other agencies in acting against those committing the abuse. This can include taking tenancy enforcement action against perpetrators.
 - We also acknowledge that not all survivors of domestic abuse end their relationship with the perpetrator, and we will work to support and maximise survivor safety whilst being respectful of their decision.



Working in partnership to provide a cohesive response.

- 2.8 Multi-agency partnership approaches are most effective in tackling domestic abuse and we will work proactively with other organisations, with the customer's consent, to ensure a coordinated cohesive response.

Action against the perpetrator

- 2.9 Domestic abuse is a crime and a breach of tenancy. We will manage domestic abuse cases on an individual basis, with a survivor focused approach whilst holding perpetrators to account. We will focus on ways to support survivors so disruption to their lives is minimised.
- 2.10 We can work with partner agencies to share information or evidence that may support perpetrator prosecution and will consider taking action to end a perpetrator's tenancy where appropriate.
- 2.11 We will work alongside survivors to ensure that any action we take is done in partnership with them and their wishes will be considered.
- 2.12 We will consider appropriate action to take against the perpetrator. However, we will not act against the perpetrator if it may increase the risk to the survivor. Our top priority is to ensure the survivor's safety and wellbeing. In circumstances where it is appropriate to do so, we may refer perpetrators to domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. We will manage any breach of tenancy agreement by perpetrators in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

Survivor Feedback

- 2.13 We will ensure that we use survivor feedback to inform what we do, and we will continually improve our response to domestic abuse by asking for and learning from survivor feedback and feedback from other agencies.

Training

- 2.14 We will provide clear guidance and training for all colleagues on being alert to the signs of domestic abuse and how to report concerns and disclosures. We will include intersectional awareness raising in training such as regarding same sex relationships and honour-based abuse.
- 2.15 We will provide regular, trauma-based approach training for colleagues who support survivors and their families.



3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 All colleagues are responsible for carrying out their work in line with this policy and associated procedures. Director of Communities is responsible for overall implementation of this policy. Specific responsibilities are set out below:

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|--|
| Executive Director Customer Insight | Has responsibility for final sign off on the policy. |
| Manager – Community Safety | Is responsible for reviewing the policy and amending accordingly so it supports the associated strategic aims and legal and regulatory requirements. |
| ASB/DA Team | Are responsible for delivering the domestic abuse approach and providing support and guidance to customers. |

4. Monitoring and review

- 4.1 We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if our monitoring of the policy identifies that changes are required, for example because of changes to law, regulation or related Livv strategies and policies.

Footnote (1) Domestic Abuse Act 2021



Control framework

Compliance

This policy supports compliance with:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Child Safeguarding legislation including Children Act 2004
- The Children Act 2004
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004 S9 implemented in 2011
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Care Act 1996
- Housing Act 1996
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards 2024

| Document control | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Version | 1.0 |
| Policy applies from | July 2024 |
| Policy applies to | Livv Housing Group; Livv Homes; Livv Maintenance |
| Approved by | Executive Directors Team |
| Approved on | 17 July 2024 |
| Replacing | New policy (replacing policy on domestic abuse set out in ASB policy 2022-2025) |
| Next review due by | July 2027 |
| Responsible Executive Director | Executive Director – Customer Insight |
| Policy author | Manager – Community Safety |
| Equality Analysis | May 2024 |
| Environmental Impact Assessment | Not required |
| Circulation | Intranet; Livv Housing Group website |



Version control

| Version | Date of Review | Summary of changes made |
|---------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1.0 | July 2024 | New policy. |

