

Habitare Homes Limited: Domestic Abuse Policy

Version:	2.0
Author:	Operations Director
Policy Owner:	Board
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Approved by:	Board

1 | Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Habitare Homes Limited (“Habitare”) will support and assist any person experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse. Habitare does not tolerate abuse and believes that our residents and those within their household should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner, or any other member of their household.

2 | Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all residents who live in accommodation owned or managed by us, staff whether employed directly by Habitare, a partner/contractor, and any other individual who is responsible for visiting properties owned on behalf of Habitare or its Managing Agents.
- 2.2 Where a Managing Agent is engaged to manage properties on behalf of Habitare:
- The Managing Agent will apply all aspects of the Domestic Abuse Policy on our behalf, and ensure their staff and contractors are trained on the policy.
 - The Managing Agents will inform Habitare of all significant activities undertaken in fulfilment of the policy where required.
 - The words “staff”, “we” and “us” in this policy refers to the staff of Habitare, and the Managing Agent with regard to all operational matters.

3 | Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Habitare have an agreed framework to deal with all reports of domestic abuse effectively and efficiently. We will work in partnership with our Managing Agents, specialist agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to develop a coordinated approach when responding to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.

- 3.2 We are committed to working proactively with partners and other agencies to provide a person-centered and community coordinated response. We will provide support to victims of domestic abuse and ensure that those who perpetrate domestic abuse are held to account.

4 | Definitions

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as the following: Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

(a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and

(b) the behaviour is abusive.

- 4.2 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

- 4.3 This definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Whilst both men and women may experience domestic abuse, women and girls are disproportionately affected and are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse.

- 4.4 Managing Agent means the Housing Association or property management company appointed by Habitare to manage day-to-day housing services.

5 | Relevant Legislation

- 5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the legal and regulatory documents listed below:

- Tenancy Standard
- Neighbourhood & Community Standard
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2014
- Police and Justice Act 2006

- Child Safeguarding legislation including Children Act 2004
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victim Act 2004
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Care Act 1996
- Housing Act 1996
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Claire's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme)

5.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Habitare policies:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Tenancy Policy

6 | Our responsibility

- 6.1 Habitare processes personal data relating to domestic abuse in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. We treat all disclosures with strict confidentiality. In joint tenancy cases, information about abuse will not be shared with the other tenant(s) without explicit consent, as victim safety and privacy take precedence. Records are stored securely and retained only as long as necessary.
- 6.2 Habitare expects all individuals working for us in managing our properties to be alert to both actual and suspected abuse. This is particularly relevant for those who have personal contact with residents, particularly those who visit residents in their own homes.
- 6.3 We will take a person-centred approach in responding to domestic abuse to try and minimise danger to the victim and members of their household. A victim's disclosure alone is sufficient for them to be given priority advice and assistance in an empathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way. We will ensure that people experiencing abuse are not deterred from reporting abuse.
- 6.4 We will be guided by the victim/survivor in determining the most appropriate course of action, considering what the person experiencing the abuse wants and feels, together with the severity of the abuse and any additional criminality. This will also include offering support to extended family members.
- 6.5 We respect that victims/survivors of abuse may wish to speak to, and be supported in, a neutral and safe venue by an employee of the same gender and/or similar ethnic or cultural background. We will ensure that we take account of communication needs when offering support to those experiencing domestic abuse.

- 6.6 We will make safeguarding referrals for children and adults where appropriate to ensure those affected by domestic abuse, have access to services as early as possible.
- 6.7 We will take firm action against anyone responsible for domestic abuse. This will only be done in cases where it is in the best interest of the victim/survivor and where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual. We will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken.
- 6.8 We will give clear and concise advice on their housing options and signpost them to specialist agencies for additional support. We will consider a management move to an alternative address should it be clear it is unsafe for them to remain in their current home.
- 6.9 We will support people who have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies. We will provide support to ensure that civil and criminal remedies can be pursued.
- 6.10 We will work in partnership with our Managing Agents to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and take firm action (where evidence is available) against anyone responsible for domestic abuse. This will only be done in cases where it is in the best interest of the victim/survivor and by including them in the decision making.

7 | Stakeholders

- 7.1 We will work in partnership with our Managing Agents and a variety of specialist agencies, the local authority and statutory organisations so our residents receive the protection and support they need.
- 7.2 Habitare does not directly provide legal advice or counselling services, but will work closely with stakeholders such as social services, health and voluntary and specialist agencies such as Women's Aid.

8 | Monitoring and Performance

- 8.1 The Board of directors of Habitare has overall responsibility for this policy.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed every two years or when there is a change in circumstances or the introduction of new legislation.
- 8.3 The Board will receive an annual report detailing any cases raised in that reporting year.

Version Control

Date	Amendment	Version
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June 2024	New Policy Implemented	V1.0
June 2026	Review of policy	V2.0