



# Domestic Abuse Reflective Toolkit.

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The Voice of Scotland's Housing Associations



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# Foreword

Responding to domestic abuse remains one of the biggest challenges facing society today - and it's a challenge which housing associations play an important role in confronting.

Domestic abuse is the most common form of violence against women and girls; and it is also the main cause of homelessness for women and children in Scotland.

We know that housing associations and co-operatives are well positioned to support victims and survivors. Housing teams operating on the frontline of services and support to tenants, are likely to come across potential indicators of abuse, such as rent arrears, noise complaints and frequent home repairs.

As organisations close to communities, housing association staff are in people's homes and communities every day. This gives them an immediate and tangible understanding of the distinct challenges faced by their tenants and allows them to play a key role in working with other agencies and services to tackle them, including domestic abuse.

So this practical toolkit could not be more important. It has been developed by Dr. Kelly Henderson of Addressing Domestic Abuse in collaboration with SFHA members and aims to support our members in adopting good practice when tackling domestic abuse.

It will also cover some of the new legislative requirements social landlords must comply with regarding domestic abuse as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which is making its way through Parliament and is expected to be law in 2026. These new requirements include support for tenants experiencing rent arrears, and those at risk of homelessness because of domestic abuse.

We hope this toolkit can serve as a practical, accessible and trusted resource to enable SFHA members to reflect on current practice, identify any gaps and, where necessary, adopt new approaches to support victims and survivors. We hope it makes a difference.



**Sally Thomas**  
SFHA Chief Executive

## With special thanks to the Self-Reflection Toolkit Member Review Group contributors:

- Angus Housing Association
- Barrhead Housing Association
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# Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to support housing associations across Scotland to recognise and respond to domestic abuse.

It builds on previous documents including the ‘Good Practice Guide for Landlords’ (Scottish Women’s Aid and Chartered Institute of Housing) which provides comprehensive information on domestic abuse for landlords and includes a policy template and ‘Policies not Promises’ which examined Scottish housing providers’ response to the ‘Make a Stand’ campaign.

The purpose of this document is to provide a practical toolkit that housing professionals can use to shape and reflect on their response to domestic abuse

with a view to continuous improvement. This document will briefly set the scene in relation to domestic abuse, its extent across Scotland and examine the interface of housing management and domestic abuse. It is important that providers understand how domestic abuse might impact on all tenants, such as those from marginalised communities, racialised and minoritised communities, those with disabilities, older tenants and LGBTQ+ tenants and consider our approach and where this may compound things for some.

### A Note on Language

The term **domestic abuse** will be used throughout the report to mean intimate partner violence and abuse (including ex-partners, and ex-spouses). The term **victim-survivor** is used to define those experiencing harm and perpetrator of domestic abuse is used to determine those causing harm. The Scottish Government recognises domestic abuse as gender based violence.

# Domestic Abuse Setting the Scene

## Extent of Domestic Abuse in Scotland

While previous documents have set the scene in relation to the extent of domestic abuse in detail, it is useful to add some information in this document so that readers can have some context.

Police Scotland report that from April and September 2024 there were 20,271 reported crimes of domestic abuse, for the same period in 2023 there were 18,243 representing an increase of 2,028 crimes from the previous year.

For 2023/24

Police Scotland recorded

63,867 incidents of domestic abuse

81%

involved a male perpetrator and female victim survivor

15%

involved a female perpetrator and male victim survivor

3%

featuring same sex couples

50%

of domestic abuse incidents, where the relationship between the victim survivor and suspected perpetrator was known, were between ex-partners

49%

of incidents were between current partners

1%

of incidents, the relationship was categorised as 'Other'.

90%

of all domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling where location was recorded.

According to Police Scotland they are called to attend a domestic abuse incident every

9 minutes

Figure 1

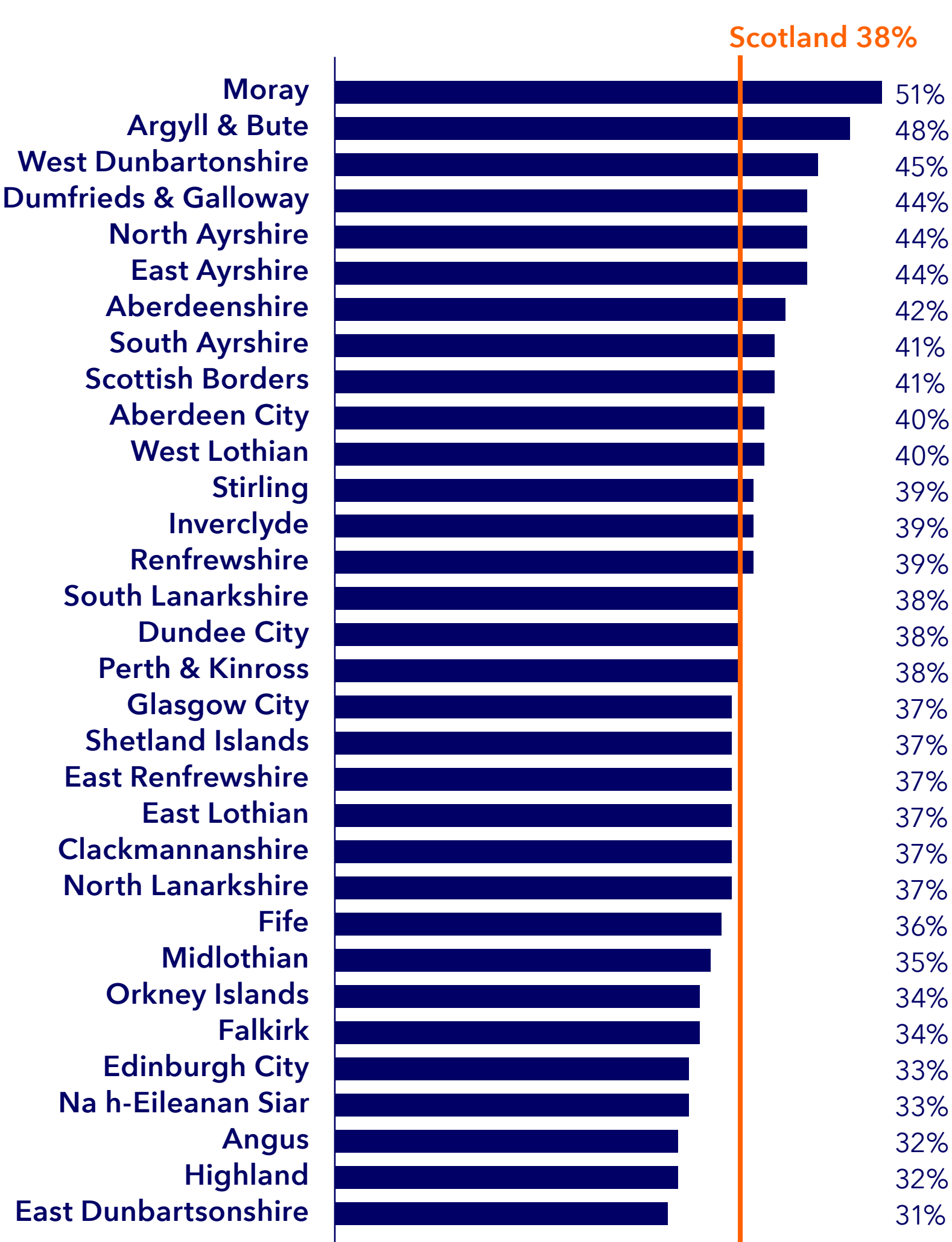


Figure 1 shows the rate of domestic abuse recorded by Police incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police per 10,000 population by local authority area for 2023-24 with Moray as the highest (51%) and East Dunbartonshire the lowest (31%).

Figure 2

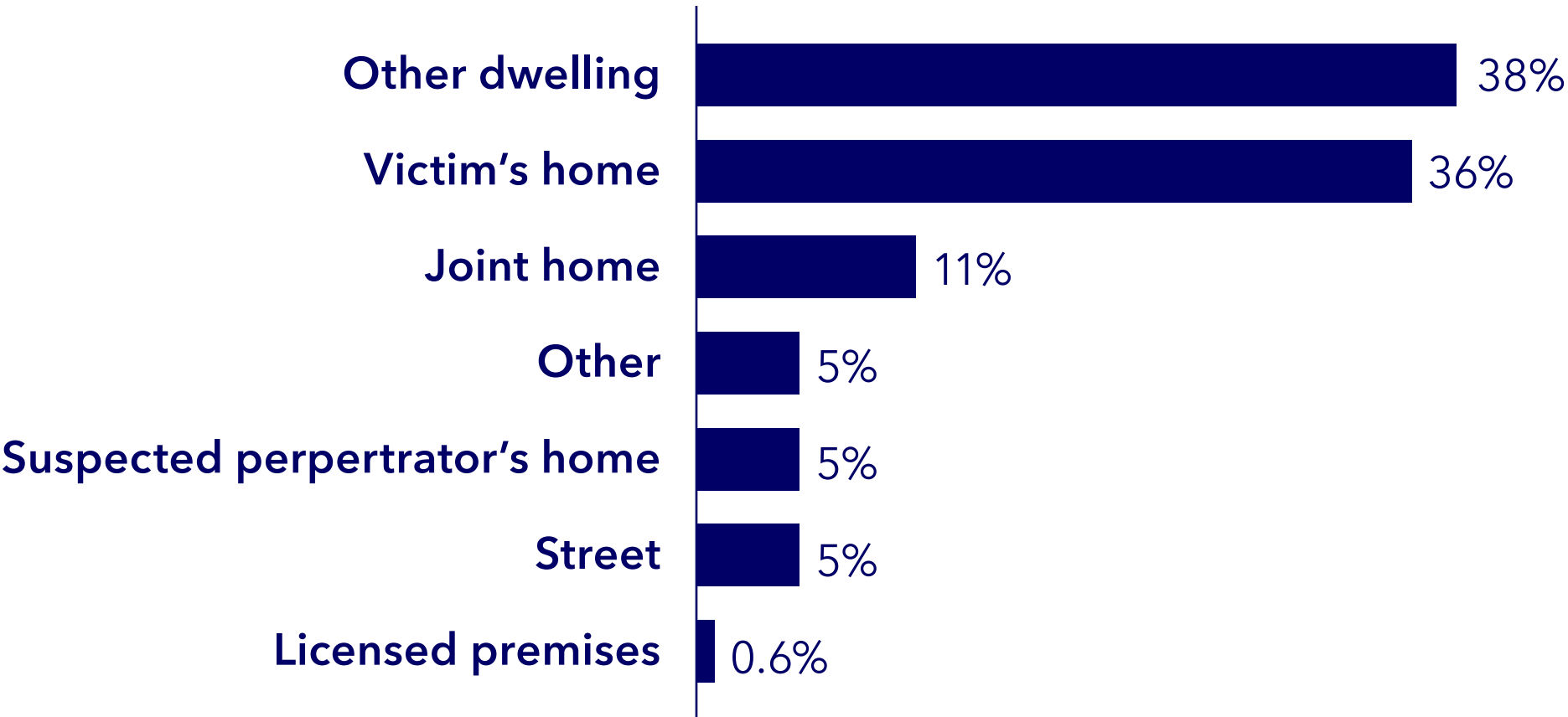


Figure 2 shows where the domestic abuse incidents occurred with dwellings including the victim's home being the highest.

# Housing and Domestic Abuse

Research has consistently shown that housing is a key resource enabling women to escape violence and abuse from partners and ex-partners, and that a major reason why women stay in or return to violent relationships is lack of access to safe, long-term, independent, affordable accommodation (Pahl, 1985; Malos and Hague, 1993; Charles; 1994).

Women's Aid England (2024) in their *'The Price of Safety: The cost of leaving a perpetrator and rebuilding a safe, independent life'* report state that it could cost a survivor almost £50,000 to leave an abuser. They calculated the direct costs of fleeing and rebuilding a new life, stating that a victim-survivor might face a £10,000 deficit after receiving her full entitlement of support from the state.

They further point out that barriers to accessing safe accommodation after leaving an abuser include access to refuge. In their *'Nowhere to Turn'* Report (2024), they found the reasons women were turned away from refuge included refuge space being no longer available (**29.1%**) and **17.2%** of women spent time 'sofa surfing' while waiting for a refuge space, with **14.7%** staying in local authority emergency accommodation.





# Background and Legislative Framework

## The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force on 1 April 2019. The Act created a new statutory offence of engaging in a course of behaviour which is abusive of a partner or ex-partner.

### Domestic Abuse Scotland Act (2018) Definition Summary

A person commits an offence if the person (A) engages in a course of behaviour which is abusive of A's partner or ex-partner (B), and both of the further conditions are met. That a reasonable person would consider the course of behaviour to be likely to cause B to suffer physical or psychological harm, that either (i) A intends by the course of behaviour to cause B to suffer physical or psychological harm, or (ii) A is reckless as to whether the course of behaviour causes B to suffer physical or psychological harm.

### Domestic abuse can include:

- being threatened
- name calling
- controlling what you do, where you go and who you speak to
- threatening your children
- not being allowed see your friends and family
- accusing you of cheating
- threatening to out your sexual orientation
- sharing - or threatening to share - intimate images of you with family, friends or work colleagues
- being hit, kicked, punched, or have objects thrown at you
- rape, being forced into sexual acts.



## Housing Scotland Bill (2024)

The Bill has seven main parts and is yet to be enacted. One of the main areas for social landlords is Part 5 (section 41) of the Act which relates to homelessness prevention. It places an Ask and Act duty on social landlords, police and health boards to “ask and act” about a person’s housing situation and act to avoid them becoming homeless wherever possible. It also requires (Section 44) social landlords to put in place support for tenants if they are overdue on rent due to domestic abuse.

The Bill categorises domestic abuse as:

- (a) violence, harassment, threatening conduct, and any other conduct giving rise, or likely to give rise, to physical or mental injury, fear, alarm or distress, and
- (b) in a case where abuse of a person is from a partner or ex-partner, abusive behaviour by the partner or ex-partner within the meaning of section 2 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021.

In addition, in cases where there is a sole tenancy case and the victim survivor has been *living with* the perpetrator *but is not named* on the tenancy agreement, social landlords will have the power to apply to the court for repossession on the grounds of domestic abuse. The landlord will be able to award the tenancy to the victim survivor as the sole tenant meaning they can remain in the home and the perpetrator is no longer on the tenancy. This can be in cases whereby the tenant had previously left because of the domestic abuse.

Where there is a joint tenancy, social landlords will be able to apply to court to terminate the perpetrator’s part of the tenancy on the grounds of domestic abuse, allowing victims to remain in the home as the sole tenant. Again, this can be in cases whereby the tenant had previously left because of the domestic abuse.

While there is no specific timetable currently for the enactment of the Bill, housing providers should start planning for the practical implications of awarding tenancies to victim survivors and removing perpetrators from tenancies.

# Considering Our Response

Asking about a person's experiences in their relationships and recognising the signs of possible domestic abuse can be crucial in ensuring they get support that meets their needs.

If you are concerned a tenant may be experiencing domestic abuse, offer to talk privately with them somewhere that they feel safe. The person may have been living with domestic abuse for several years and be afraid of telling someone. Many will be worried about disclosing what is going on and we should not underestimate the strength this takes. Finding a comfortable space where they can feel as safe as possible will help. You might wish to run sessions with staff on how to approach asking open questions and responding to a disclosure.

Your response can help victim survivors know that they are not alone and to feel that they will be believed.

Ask sensitive, open questions that help the person talk about their experiences. If the person needs support to communicate such as interpreter, you should only use a professional who is impartial and has a duty to maintain confidentiality. Do not use family and friends.

Findaway offers helpful advice in responding to domestic abuse and gives examples what it may look like. You can access more information here: [wefindaway.org.uk/\\_files/ugd/b27261\\_18bc22fc403e44a9a8b75e3e404d49d3.pdf](https://wefindaway.org.uk/_files/ugd/b27261_18bc22fc403e44a9a8b75e3e404d49d3.pdf)

Scottish Women's Aid offer helpful advice on responding to domestic abuse and again while this is aimed at friends, there are very helpful in providing tips on how to respond. You can read it in more detail here: [womensaid.scot/information-support/im-worried-about-someone-i-know](https://womensaid.scot/information-support/im-worried-about-someone-i-know)



## Understanding Trauma

The impact of trauma on behaviour has been demonstrated in terms of contact with Social Work or the Criminal Justice System (CJS), or difficulties in education, employment or the primary care system. While the housing sector is starting to understand more about recognising trauma there is still a long to go.

Being trauma informed means recognising when a tenant may be affected by trauma, making adjustments with the person in a collaborative way to take this into account and responding in a way that supports their recovery as opposed to adding to that trauma in our response.

The Scottish Government has established the key principles of trauma-informed practice and state the key principles underpinning trauma-informed practice, services and systems are safety, collaboration, trust, empowerment and choice. You can find out more details in adopting this approach here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/pages/6/>

To have a truly trauma informed approach requires organisational change. Many organisations are just starting this journey and have much to learn. We can learn about the principles and adapt them to our response.

## Recognising Risk

The Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Abuse Risk Indicator Checklist (DASH RIC) is used to assess risk and is used by Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and other public facing organisations. The tool helps professionals to identify and assess risks when a survivor discloses domestic abuse, so called 'honour'- based violence or stalking. It is important to point out that risk is not static and can change so in effect it is a snapshot of time. The concept of risk is dynamic and constantly evolves. The risk assessment captures risks at a single point in time and does not consider a constantly evolving environment.

Safelives, the organisation that devised the Risk Assessment have produced useful free to access guides including one for housing professionals. The Risk Assessment asks several questions covering economic abuse, threats and coercion, coercive threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and isolation, sexual abuse and children and pregnancy.

Each answer builds a picture of the person's risk and scores over a certain threshold (usually 14) would result in the case being heard at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). Professional judgement can also trigger a case being heard at MARAC. If a professional has serious concerns about a victim's situation, they can refer the case to MARAC. Safelives point out that there may be occasions where the context of a case can give rise to serious concerns even when the victim has not disclosed the information that might highlight the risk. Professional judgement might be used when there are extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers.

The MARAC is part of a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic abuse in partnership with other organisations. The meeting shares information on the highest risk domestic abuse cases with local police, probation, health, children's and adult social care, housing departments, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) as well as specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors in attendance. Safelives recommends that from the point of disclosure a MARAC meeting should take place within a maximum of six weeks. Each area will have different meeting frequencies.

During the MARAC, after sharing all relevant information about a victim, the perpetrator and any children, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and children and produce a coordinated risk management action plan addressing the identified risks.

The MARAC housing representative is usually a person with managerial oversight, and they update the meeting about the victim survivor, perpetrator and any children. They offer advice and actions around any housing issues.

Many organisations do not undertake the DASH RIC and make a referral to a specialist agency to undertake it. Some organisations do carry it out and make referrals to MARAC. To effectively undertake the DASH RIC, staff should be well trained by a specialist agency and understand the reasons for asking the questions, so it does not become a tick box exercise.

## Rail to Refuge

You might have a situation whereby a victim survivor has accessed refuge accommodation. For many victim survivors the refuge space may be out of area. There is support available to ensure they can travel to take up the refuge space. Rail to Refuge is a joint initiative between rail companies and Women's Aid whereby train operators cover the cost of train tickets for survivors and their children to enable them to travel to refuges. Survivors can access the scheme via Scottish Women's Aid and if appropriate, the survivor will be referred to a refuge and informed once a refuge vacancy has been confirmed. The Refuge books a free train (or coach ticket) for the survivor. They can send the ticket and collection details to the survivor via text, or the survivor can access an e-ticket or text can be sent to their mobile phone to pick the ticket up from the station using any debit or credit card (not charged). The refuge can also request the ticket be sent by post. 62% of survivors who accessed the scheme said they would not have travelled if the journey wasn't paid for.

# Housing Management and Domestic Abuse

Research indicates that only a third of domestic abuse victims tell someone in an official position with only a quarter seeking support from a specialist agency, so it is crucial that housing providers can recognise and respond to domestic abuse.

It takes a lot of strength to disclose domestic abuse with many fearing they will not be believed or that it will be minimised or dismissed so it is essential housing providers are proactive in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Consideration should be given regarding effective training within your organisation so that your organisation is able to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. Some organisations offer a stepped approach to training with different roles receiving targeted training to their roles. For example, a Repairs Operative receives different training to a Neighbourhood Officer or Housing Officer. Another consideration is who will lead this work, coordinating your response and will you have 'Champions' to ensure your organisation has interested and committed team members to receive extra training and consider the approach in their specific work area.

**The next section  
will cover a range of  
housing management  
day to day issues.**

**1. Repairs**

**2. Income Management / Rent Arrears**

**3. Anti-social Behaviour / Noise Nuisance**

**4. Management Moves, Sanctuary Schemes, Tenancy  
Agreements, Joint Tenancies and Sign-ups**

**5. Website/Newsletters/Correspondence/Engagement**

**6. Responding to Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse**

**7. Recruitment, Inductions and Supporting Staff**

# 1. Repairs

Repairs can be a useful pointer to highlight potential domestic abuse. Firstly, analysing repair trends and secondly ensuring repairs operatives are trained to recognise domestic abuse when carrying out work in customers’ homes.

As well as it being the right thing to do, there are also positive business benefits to considering repairs through a domestic abuse lens. One housing provider in the UK with 30,000 homes found that by analysing certain Schedule of Rates (SOR) codes they were spending £8.4 million on repairs potentially linked to domestic abuse over a 2-year period which equated to over 43,000 appointments their operatives were being sent to.

**Figure 3 Examples of repairs that might be linked to domestic abuse might be:**

Some SOR codes might point to domestic abuse, for example, punch holes in walls (plaster repairs), the perpetrator breaking a window, the victim survivor needing a lock change where the perpetrator has a key for the property. Repairs to bathroom and bedroom doors for example could be because of the victim survivor trying to escape the perpetrator and lock themselves in a room for safety. Other repairs might include broken kitchen units or bathroom appliances where things have been thrown at the victim survivor.

**Schedule of Rates (SOR)**

<b>Glazing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Temporary Board Window and Reglaze</li></ul>	<b>Plumbing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Replace Basin / Bath Panel</li><li>- Replace Shower Screen</li><li>- Re Fix Shower Screen</li><li>- Radiators damaged</li></ul>
<b>Joinery (and Multi Skilled)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lock Change Repair Door Frame</li><li>- Replace Kitchen Unit Door (including other kitchen unit repairs)</li><li>- Repair Bathroom Door Lock Replace Door</li><li>- Rehang Door</li><li>- Renew Window Frame</li></ul>	<b>Plastering and Tiling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Plaster Patch Wall</li><li>- Re-tile Broken tiles</li></ul>
<b>Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Renew Gate</li><li>- Repair / Renew Fence</li></ul>	<b>Electrical / Gas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Renew Light Fitting</li><li>- Gas and Electric annual safety checks</li></ul>

# Training Repairs Staff to Recognise Domestic Abuse

Repairs can be an indicator of domestic abuse. Many organisations carrying out repairs across the UK use an Eyes and Ears approach whereby repairs operatives are trained to understand what domestic abuse is and how to recognise it when they are in properties undertaking repairs.

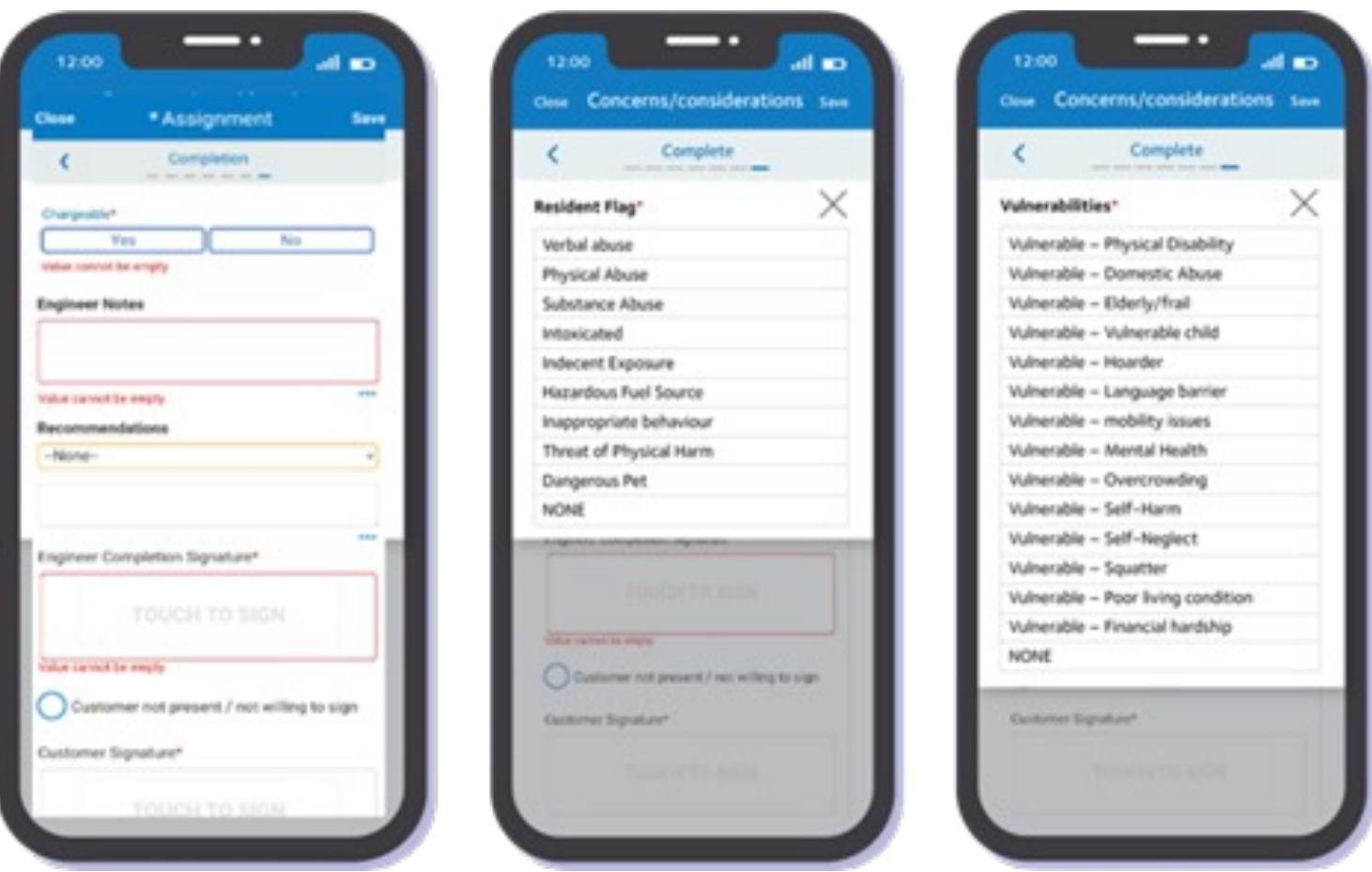
Repairs operatives in a home can often be unobtrusive meaning often people do not change their behaviour as much as when a housing officer is at the property. Operatives can see and hear may things that a housing officer would not. Damage to the property or the customer’s belongings may also point to domestic abuse. Training should cover signs of domestic abuse in certain repairs as well as being able to recognise how domestic abuse may present itself in the demeanour of customers.

Other areas without this technology use an email to a specific address or a postcard where the operative can write the concerns and place them in a box which is monitored.

# Establishing a Referral Pathway for any Concerns

As well as training for operatives to recognise domestic abuse, it is crucial that a referral pathway is in place so they can report any concerns in a straightforward, seamless way. Some organisations have a button or space on their hand-held devices where they can tick a box to outline what the concern might be and add a little detail which is sent to the appropriate team to investigate (see figure 4).

Figure 4 Handheld Device – Flagging Concerns



## Case Study

Usef, a multi-skilled operative attended a property to undertake some bathroom work in the home of Carol and David, a couple with two children, aged 11 and 14. The work involves re- hanging a bathroom door and replacing a cracked bath panel. He remembers he has carried out work on this property previously. When he arrived at the property he starts on the work and soon after has a query.

He sees Carol and starts to ask a question. She seems nervous and says she will go and get David. David explains that one of their children had thrown a tantrum and kicked the bathroom door in, which is why the lock was broken.

Training should cover relevant to their role and equip staff to recognise domestic abuse. A key part of ensuring that referrals are made will be to spell out how the Neighbourhood / Housing Management Team will sensitively investigate any referrals repairs operatives make. For example, explaining that appropriate staff might visit the property and say they are visiting about the person's rent account or that they are carrying out consultation in the area so they can speak to the person if they are alone and let them know they can provide support and help.

If an organisation does not have in-house repairs and uses contractors, there is scope to include recognising and responding to domestic abuse as a key condition of any contracts awarded via the procurement process. This can include a clause to state something like:

**‘All employees will complete domestic abuse awareness training prior to any contract commencement, to ensure they can deliver services on Day 1 of the contract. Training Records must be available for inspection. Training modules must be supplied prior to contract commencement and will be signed off by (include your organisation). This will include any TUPE transfers and new staff.’**

Consideration will need to be given about referral pathways so that your organisation receives any concerns and there is a clear referral pathway.

## Things to Consider

To create deeper insight of domestic abuse in relation to repairs organisations could check some of the SORs outlined above against those the homes of those tenants who have disclosed domestic abuse and compare them against those tenants who have not disclosed domestic abuse to see if there are any differences. Things to consider might be the type and / or number of repairs. Things to identify might include emergency or repeat repairs and identifying any differences when comparing. This information may provide your organisation with some useful data, help staff understand the importance of repairs telling a story and help direct resources.

Interrogating your repairs system to see what reports it can deliver that might tell a story. You could consider:

- The **nature** of repairs (SORs) in homes with domestic abuse compared with homes where there is no domestic abuse reported.
- The **number or frequency** of repairs in homes with domestic abuse in a group of selected SORs
- Do your staff need to check **repairs history** manually - or does your system pick this up.
- The **interaction between staff roles** - do your Neighbourhood Team have any insight into repairs that are scheduled? This means they can best piece things together with other signs.
- **Rechargeable Repairs** - they might tell a story. The victim survivor may prefer to pay for repairs rather than invite any questions as to the nature of repairs.
- **No entry for gas and electric checks** - cross referencing no entry with other information and considering domestic abuse as a possible reason for no entry as the victim survivor is worried about someone accessing the property.
- **Feedback to staff reporting concerns** - how will you update staff that their reporting is making a difference? While you will not be able to give an update on individual cases, there is scope to report back (in toolbox talks) on the number of concerns raised and anonymised case studies.
- **Ensuring** Contact Centre staff are trained to recognise domestic abuse and equipped to refer any concerns to the appropriate team. Training should also cover what they should do if they receive a disclosure.
- Including a domestic abuse training requirement in repairs **outsourcing** repairs contract procurement process.

## 2. Income Management / Rent Arrears

Rent arrears can be an important sign of economic abuse. Research by CIH Wales found that tenants who were victim survivors of domestic abuse were 4 times more likely to be in rent arrears than the rest of the population in the area. It is important to understand the range of economic abuse which is wider than financial abuse.

Economic abuse is when a person interferes with their partner's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources. It is wide ranging and can include the restriction, exploitation or sabotage of a person's housing, food, clothing, transportation, employment, and education. This might include not allowing the victim survivor to use their own car, spoil their work uniform so they can't attend work thereby sabotaging their employment.

It might manifest in the perpetrator taking the victim survivor's salary, not allowing them to work or study and not allowing them to access bank accounts. It can be coercing them into taking loans in their name with the duty to repay sitting solely with them or taking out contracts (such as mobile phone) that they are contracted to meet payments for. Economic abuse seeks to isolate the victim survivor economically, so they don't have the means to escape the abuse.

Research from Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) suggests that 95% of women experience financial abuse as part of domestic abuse. They highlight this can result in her being left without money for food and other essentials, no access to her own bank account, as well as debts in her name including rent arrears, which she may not know about. In SEA's work with women who have experienced domestic violence, 50% said they had been made to take out a

loan or buy something on credit when they did not want to. 43% said that their partner had built up debt in their name. 33% said that their partner had taken out a loan or bought something using credit in their name without their permission.

Having discussions around finances can be difficult for many tenants. It can be particularly difficult if they have been subjected to economic abuse. Surviving Economic Abuse offer a toolkit to help start discussions around economic abuse Conversation kit to introduce economic abuse - Surviving Economic Abuse as well as a screening tool: [survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Questions-to-screen-for-economic-abuse.pdf](https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Questions-to-screen-for-economic-abuse.pdf) and have a free to access de-linking from the abuser check list that will be useful. It covers income, checking where wages are paid (i.e. joint account or sole account) benefits and pensions, financial products such as credit cards, car finance, loans and bank accounts, Housing such as mortgage, tenancy agreement, TV licence, streaming contracts, subscriptions, insurance as well as Credit Reports such as Experian so that all can be updated. [survivingeconomicabuse.org](https://survivingeconomicabuse.org).

Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill imposes a pre-action requirement where domestic abuse is a factor in rent arrears. This is to help protect the rights of tenants

experiencing domestic abuse living in social housing to remain in their home or be re-housed and ensure any arrears accrued due to domestic abuse do not prevent them accessing social housing in future. This requires landlords to fully consider further actions that could assist the victim-survivor before eviction action for rent arrears can be taken in court.

Department of Work and Pensions can offer breaks from work-related requirements for victim survivors of domestic abuse in receipt of Universal Credit. Victim survivors are entitled to a 13-week break from work-related requirements (provided certain conditions are met). This break can be extended to 26 weeks if they are the main carer of a child under 16. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-and-abuse-help-from-dwp/help-available-from-the-department-for-work-and-pensions-for-people-who-are-victims-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse>

Requests can also be made to DWP for split payments for Universal Credit meaning that one person does not get paid the full household amount. A split payment can be paid to 2 separate members of the household. The larger percentage of the payment is given to person who has primary caring responsibilities such as childcare.

## Case Study Katy

Katy had been a tenant for 6 years and had never been in rent arrears until 6 months ago. Her partner, Ben had moved in about a year ago. They both worked in full time jobs. Katy's Neighbourhood Officer recently visited to assess the situation regarding the arrears that were now £700. Katy explained that she had been late a couple of times as she hadn't been able to find her work uniform and on the third time this happened, she had lost her job.

She explained that Ben was always saying she wasn't that great with money, and he was right, so she gave him her debit card to keep safe for her. She would check her account and then make a payment.

The Housing Officer felt something was not quite right with this and continued to visit Katy where it transpired that Ben didn't like Katy working in the casino so had hidden her work uniform and this had resulted in her losing her job.

He refused to return Katy's bank card and said he would use it to pay some of the arrears off. This didn't happen and as the tenancy was in Katy's name the arrears were her responsibility.

## Things to Consider

- Running a cross check of those tenants with rent arrears against those who had disclosed domestic abuse. Is there any correlation. Running such tests could provide you with data which can be used to create a picture across your organisation.
- Ensuring that the Money Matters Team have a thorough understanding of economic abuse and how it might manifest itself.
- Understanding how to support the victim survivor to de-link from the abuser.

### 3. Anti-social Behaviour / Noise Nuisance

Domestic abuse often presents in ways that can be easily mistaken for Anti-social Behaviour (ASB). In cases of coercive control, where a victim's daily life is regulated and they are isolated from sources of support, they may not have any control over what is happening in their tenancy.

It is important that housing professionals are aware of how domestic abuse can manifest in day-to-day housing management and consider these factors when investigating complaints. A victim survivor may be the tenant where there have not been any issues at the property previously. Then there are complaints about noise or disturbances, such as people coming and going at all hours for example.

One of the biggest challenges victim survivors can face is being viewed as ASB perpetrators rather than victims of domestic abuse. Research from CIH Wales has shown that 40% of domestic abuse victims in one area had ASB complaints made against them, compared to just 9% of the general population.

Job titles and Team names can also be crucial as to whether a victim survivor feels they can seek help and support. Imagine receiving a letter or phone call from a 'Tenancy Enforcement Officer' or 'ASB Officer'. As a victim survivor you may assume these roles are focused on enforcement, rather than offering support and add to the worry you may have about action being taken against them. It might be useful for staff such as Community Wellbeing Officer / Wellbeing / Support staff to have the initial conversation.

Victim survivors may fear that no one will believe them, particularly when they have been isolated from all sources of support. They may also worry about losing their children and / or their home if they disclose what's happening.

#### Case Study Meena

Meena's partner, Ali had moved into her property 3 months ago after they had been together for 6 months. Meena has a 2-year-old from a previous partner.

Since moving in he had friends' round and there had been some noise on a few occasions late into the night. The neighbours had complained, and Meena had apologised saying she would have a word with Ali, and it wouldn't happen again. She spoke with Ali about who said he could make as much noise as he wanted, and her neighbours were causing trouble.

Since moving in Ali has become more controlling, not allowing her to go out without him and constantly checking on where she is. Meena has gradually lost contact with her friends and is being isolated further. Ali must be there when her ex-partner picks up their daughter.

Meena is worried as more complaints have been made by neighbours and this time they have reported them to the housing office. Meena has received a card from the Anti-social Behaviour Officer to contact them. She is feeling very apprehensive that her tenancy might be at risk and doesn't know what to say. She wants Ali to move out and for the relationship to end but is scared as to how he would react.

### Things To Consider

- Cross referencing a range of issues including repairs, neighbour complaints, rent arrears, tenancy history to consider if the issue of noise nuisance or ASB might be domestic abuse related.
- Ensuring you take the opportunity to interview / speak to tenant(s) individually.
- Scrutinising your organisation's job titles and team names – might this be a barrier to a victim survivor feeling they can disclose.
- Cross referencing with domestic abuse specialist agencies. See Scottish Women's Aid for agencies in your area. [womensaid.scot](https://www.womensaid.scot)

## Recording Domestic Abuse on your Case Management System

Research (Henderson, 2019) found that 65% of housing providers did not classify domestic abuse as an issue in its own right and it was often included as ASB within case management systems.

It is crucial to build a picture of domestic abuse by recording it as a separate issue. Some organisations ensure their system can categorise the presenting type of domestic abuse so they can build up their understanding. It is well documented that victim survivors of domestic abuse will not experience one type of domestic abuse so this recording will be the presenting issue only.

Some systems include a summary of the case in chronological order for MARAC (Multi Agency Risk and Assessment Conference).

### Things to Consider

- How do you record domestic abuse on your case management system, is it a standalone category or part of ASB? By making domestic abuse a standalone category your organisation can ensure it creates a picture of domestic abuse and domestic abuse cases do not get lost in ASB.
- Exploring the reporting mechanisms of your system to ensure that data can be interrogated to create a detailed picture of domestic abuse including characteristics of victim survivor which might determine staff training needs and influence any campaigns.
- Does it show perpetrators with multiple historical victims?
- Do your systems speak to each other in that can you cross reference with rent arrears and repairs easily to create a whole picture.

# 4. Management Moves, Sanctuary Schemes, Tenancy Agreements, Joint Tenancies and Sign-ups

## Management Moves and Sanctuary Schemes

It is important that domestic abuse is covered within any Allocations or Domestic Abuse policy and procedures and clearly lays out what options are available including staying in the home.

It is important that staff work with the tenant to look at options that are available to them so the tenant can make an informed choice. A key element of this will include that all staff are trained to respond with empathy and understand the trauma of leaving a home and neighbourhood and potentially moving somewhere unfamiliar.

West Dunbartonshire Council introduced a zero-tolerance policy on domestic abuse within its properties as part of its 'No Home for Domestic Abuse'. It has introduced measures to ensure victim survivors have immediate access to practical help and specialist legal assistance and support following any incident of domestic abuse. In addition, the campaign protects victim survivors by introducing a presumption that all tenancies for couples are in joint names. If an incident of domestic abuse occurs, the victim survivor is legally be entitled to remain in the home. They take a tough stance on tenants found guilty of committing domestic abuse by offering them only short-term tenancies and ensuring the property is at a distance from the victim

(each organisation will have some criteria as to what this will look like, such as a different area or neighbourhood). Consideration should be given to the survivor's needs and as discussed earlier a trauma informed approach would look at this in collaboration with the survivor.

The Revive Scotland Partnership between Wheatley Group and Homefinder UK rehouses women and children experiencing homelessness due to domestic abuse to an area of their choice outside their own local authority area: <https://www.wheatley-group.com/media/news/newsfolder/new-move-on-service-for-women-experiencing-domestic-abuse-launches-in-scotland>

Tenants may be eligible to apply for a grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund if they are on a low income or be unable to get access to their money when fleeing domestic abuse. They do not need to be in receipt of benefits to qualify for a grant. The grants are administered by local authorities. [gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-statutory-guidance-april-2025/pages/3](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-statutory-guidance-april-2025/pages/3).

### Case Study Emma

Emma had received a supportive response from the Neighbourhood Safety Team when they were alerted that her property had been fire damaged when her ex-partner had put a lit rag through her letterbox in the property she lived at with her 3-year-old. They arranged for her to have a management move to a property where she would feel safer and start to rebuild her life. She was shown a property (and told this would be her one offer of a property as it was in the area she had selected). When she went in the property, a flat which was on the ground floor she noted the door entry system didn't work and the communal door swung open without the need to use the key fob. As a result, she felt very nervous about taking the property.

She asked 'Is there not any other property that I could look at because...just to compare' adding the Lettings Officer said 'You either take this' or that's it 'I think when the handover was given to the housing team that they need to be sympathetic to the fact that I'm not just being difficult that. Yeah, I just think they need to know and just be a bit sympathetic to what your needs are and that we might seem a bit more difficult but it's just because we're coming out of a situation that we certainly don't want to get ourselves back into.'

The option of a Sanctuary Scheme is an important alternative to refuge for many women. Mullender et al. (2003) found that the move from home to refuge could involve leaving family, friends and changing school, sometimes on many occasions. She further argued this was a case of sacrificing the very things that gave their daily lives structure and meaning to be safe. While some areas will not have access to a Sanctuary Scheme there are still some safety measures that could be offered. For example, Ring Doorbells can be used to record unwanted visits to the victim survivor's property. Some organisations are supplying them to victim survivors, and they will record any visits to the property that can be used as evidence. Lock changes, window locks and security lights can also increase feelings of safety.

### Things to Consider

- How does your organisation respond to domestic abuse cases that require a management move or transfer.
- What band does domestic abuse fit within? Ideally it should be in a priority band (i.e. gold or silver or Band 1 or 2).
- Taking a survivor centred approach so they feel some control over finding a new home.
- What is the threshold, and ensure verification is not required from a 3rd party such as Police bearing in mind many victim survivors will not report to Police.
- Review what you consider in terms of victim safety / areas.
- Understanding reasons why a victim survivor may turn down a property in their chosen area.
- Is there scope for cross-organisation agreements.
- Does your tenancy handbook clearly set out that a management move is an option in cases of domestic abuse as well as support to stay in the home and sanctuary scheme or target hardening. Target hardening is carried out to allow a victim of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and includes fitting extra locks and chains, fireproof letterbox covers, strengthening doors, window alarms and at the highest end of the scale can include safe rooms. If a home has been adapted under a sanctuary scheme due to domestic abuse, victim survivors may be exempt from the removal of the spare room subsidy.

# Sign-ups

The sign-up of a property with a tenant(s) is an opportunity to set the scene on the organisation's response to domestic abuse. When we are signing up a new tenant, we are letting them know the expectations from the organisation and what they can expect in return.

In the case of joint tenants, it is important to explain the process of ending a joint tenancy and how this may impact on parties. It is important to explain that both tenants will be liable for rent and the condition of the property and any rechargeable repairs.

This is important as perpetrators of domestic abuse may use a joint tenancy to try and make the victim survivor homeless. If one part of the joint tenancy ends the tenancy it ends for both parties and that might mean the victim survivor is made homeless.

If the victim survivor moves out of a joint tenancy home, they are still liable for the rent and property. This means if the perpetrator does not pay rent or damages the property, they will be jointly liable which may impact on their accessing a social housing tenancy in future if rent arrears and / or rechargeable repairs are outstanding.

## Things to Consider

- Tenants signing up can be given a tenant newsletter if you have one or the organisation could create a tenancy starter pack summarising the organisation's approach to things including domestic abuse and what can be offered.
- Creating a Sign-Up video outlining the approach so that tenants can view this at their leisure (which could be accessed on mobile phones). This video could also be added to the website.

# Joint Tenancies

Section 13 of the 2001 Act states that a joint tenant of a secure tenancy may terminate their interest in the tenancy by giving 4 weeks written notice to both the landlord and the other joint tenant. It is important that any tenant gives notice as if they do not then the tenancy agreement remains in place which means both tenants remain jointly and individually responsible for paying the rent. They are also responsible for the condition of the property.

If one person gives notice that they intend to leave, as a landlord you can agree to transfer the tenancy to the victim survivor as the sole tenant. This would be useful in cases whereby the ex- partner leaves refusing to pay the rent and would thereby allow former tenant arrears to be pursued and does not hold the victim survivor responsible for all

outstanding arrears. The Scottish Government's Equality Assessment on ending joint tenancies points out that where relationships have broken down, refusal to allow another joint tenant to leave the tenancy can be used as a method of financial and coercive control.

In cases where there is decision as to who remains in the property, the court can make an order to give the tenancy to one of the tenants. This court usually finds in favour of the person who has the children living with them most of the time. There is more on this in section 6.

If a customer is enquiring about a joint tenancy, it is essential to spell out what this will mean if they or the other party later want the joint tenancy to end.

In 2025, the Housing (Scotland) Bill as part of its reforms of the rental sector will look at how joint tenancies are managed so landlords should keep a watching brief on any changes.

## Things to Consider

- When responding to a case of domestic abuse, remember to check if there is a joint tenancy and explain the situation regarding joint liability for rent to the person.
- Is it possible to grant a sole tenancy in the situation.

# 5. Website / Newsletters / Correspondence /Engagement

## Websites

Your website can be the first point of contact for customers looking for support or help in several areas.

Having a clear section on support can assist customers who may need assistance. By spelling out what domestic abuse is and what support the organisation can do (including working with specialist domestic abuse organisations) sets the scene for what they can expect both by way of emotional and practical support. For many, if there is nothing clear on your website it will be reasonable for them to assume that support is not available.

Riverside Housing developed the 'Ask for Ruth' scheme to reach out to tenants in recognition of how difficult it can be to know where to turn to for help. Tenants can complete a webform online enabling them to reach out to our specially trained team safely and in confidence. The team contacts the person using the person's chosen method at a time when they can speak freely. They also have 'Ask for Ruth' on their email footers, so this information is on any emails sent to tenants.

### Case Study Sue

Sue's partner, Scott leaves their property to head to work leaving a laptop behind. Sue is subjected to domestic abuse, is under constant surveillance and not usually allowed to access the laptop. Ben has also taken away her mobile phone. Sue opens the laptop to see if she can find some help to leave Ben safely. She is worried to search on domestic abuse support websites in case she does not delete the search completely. She searches on the website of the housing organisation where she is a joint tenant with Ben. On the front page she sees a section titled 'We can provide help and support for a range of issues.' Sue clicks into the tab and sees information on what domestic abuse is and what support is available from her housing provider as well as practical support in finding refuge accommodation, help to separate from the abuser and access to specialist organisations and helplines.

Sue takes down a number and some details and thinks she will try calling it when she goes to collect her child from school as Ben does not come with her.

### Things to Consider

- Checking your organisation's website and put yourself in the place of a tenant to see how quickly they would be able to find information on the support offered on domestic abuse including a helpline. How many clicks would it take?
- Ensuring your website has an 'exit here' button which will take the user away from the page (and transfer to something such as BBC News, for example) in case the victim survivor needs to quickly hide the page they are browsing.
- Does your website create a clear message that tenants experiencing domestic abuse could expect an understanding response from you?
- Considering tenants who are joint tenants submitting requests for information on things such as rent account, repairs etc. What steps will you need to take to ensure that each tenant can only access information that refers to themselves.
- Ensuring joint tenants require a separate sign / log in to access any information about the tenancy or their personal details, i.e. when they visited the office, for example. Check with your GDPR lead that your organisation has sufficient safeguards in place regarding separate customer log ins to tenancy information.

# Newsletters

If your organisation produces online or paper newsletters there is an opportunity to advise tenants know the type of support that they can expect in relation to domestic abuse as well as highlighting examples of what constitutes domestic abuse. Anonymised case studies with the consent of a victim survivor can go a long way in laying out what support tenants can expect such as management transfer, financial de-linking from the abuser for example.

## Case Study May

May's Housing Officer visited the home she shared with her husband for an annual tenancy check. They had been excellent tenants for over 35 years. They rarely reported repairs, the rent account was always paid in advance, and they kept their home and garden in excellent condition and there had never been any complaints from neighbours.

After the visit from the Housing Officer, May looked through the new tenant handbook that had been left. She noticed the support available for several issues such as anti-social behaviour, accessing benefits, befriending and domestic abuse. When May read the description of domestic abuse and examples of what it might look like, she recognised her own experience in that. She had thought domestic abuse was mainly physical but when she read the examples it made sense to her. She had been living with domestic abuse for over 40 years with emotional abuse and hadn't thought it was possible to access support to leave.

The next day May visited the Housing Office and spoke to her Housing Officer about what she had been living with over the years. She asked if it was possible to find a new home and she didn't want to go to the Police or a specialist domestic abuse charity. She didn't want the housing organisation to act against her husband as she was concerned what would happen next.

May was supported to move into a new home via a management move and enjoying life free from abuse.

## Things to Consider

- Planning for key dates in the diary such as United Nations (UN) Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls Day (25 November) [unwomen.org/en/get-involved/16-days-of-activism](https://unwomen.org/en/get-involved/16-days-of-activism) and the 16 days of activism which flows and ends on UN Human Rights Day (10 December). This can include events for staff and tenants, newsletter and social media newsletter pieces from partners.
- Teaming up with local domestic abuse charities and include the work they do in your newsletter.
- Including case studies / real stories to demonstrate the support and practical help tenants can expect.
- Adding the Domestic Abuse helpline to email and letter footers as well as posters in communal areas and toilets.
- If you are considering engaging with survivors to improve or change your services, it is essential your organisation seeks advice and good practice in this area. A guide to meaningful survivor engagement by specialist domestic abuse organisations points out that effective, safe survivor engagement takes time and dedication. It highlights that building internal procedures and recruiting a diverse range of survivors with different experiences and inequalities is essential as well as ensuring support is in place. [womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Final-A-guide-to-meaningful-survivor-engagement-April.pdf?\\_](https://womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Final-A-guide-to-meaningful-survivor-engagement-April.pdf?_).

# 6. Responding to Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

## Taking Enforcement Action

Policies Not Promises (2023) research found that perpetrators of domestic abuse were almost completely invisible in domestic abuse housing policies across Scotland with only six policies including actions that would be taken against perpetrators.

Just over half (22) of the policies failed to cover actions that would be taken against tenants who were perpetrators and only 6 included action they would take against tenants who were perpetrators of domestic abuse.

As highlighted under Section 4 West Dumbarton's local authority introduced the 'No Home for Domestic Abuse' campaign and as well as supporting victim survivors practically they use the full scope of Anti-Social Behaviour powers in conjunction with Housing and Matrimonial Homes Legislation to allow victim survivors to stay in the home and legally remove the perpetrator and prevent them from returning.

The 'No Home for Domestic Abuse' campaign will protect victims and their families by introducing a presumption that all tenancies for couples are in joint names. If an incident of domestic abuse occurs, the victim will legally be entitled to remain in the home. Where tenants are found guilty

of domestic abuse, they can offer them only short-term tenancies making sure the property is at a distance from the victim survivor.

Recording all information on your case management system is crucial as it can build a picture of the abuse. Using the term reported perpetrator can be useful when adding information to your case management system. When hearing disclosures from victim survivors we should take a believing approach and recognise the strength this has taken to tell someone. We could ask if they have told anyone else and if so, seek their permission to access the information to build up a picture. In terms of taking action, it is important to record as much information as possible. One housing organisation was able to act against a perpetrator as they kept highly detailed notes which outlined the coercive and controlling behaviour they exerted on the victim survivor. Information on rent arrears, repairs, any neighbour complaints including noise nuisance can all add to the picture with the victim survivor's testimony.

Housing providers can use existing anti-social behaviour powers in some cases of domestic abuse. For example, where the domestic abuse is affecting the wider community and impacting on the organisation's housing management function. Housing providers can use an **anti-social behaviour order (ASBO)** to prevent the reported

perpetrator from entering a certain location. Antisocial behaviour means doing something that causes alarm or distress to someone in a different household. This could include:

- making excessive noise
- littering or dumping rubbish
- intimidating, threatening or harassing someone
- damaging or vandalising property

The excessive noise could impact on the neighbourhood and cause distress, for example if the reported perpetrator is turning up at the property of the victim survivor and banging on the door and shouting, for example. An ASBO can be made against any person, regardless of their housing tenure. A breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence, an individual found guilty of breach of an ASBO would have a criminal conviction.

Victim survivors can apply for a **non-harassment order** which aims to prevent behaviour which that causes harm or distress. To request this order, the victim survivor must feel distressed or alarmed.

A **domestic abuse interdict** which is a court order that tells someone not to do something. If a power of arrest is attached to a domestic abuse interdict, breaking the terms of the interdict is a criminal offence. The victim survivor

can apply for an interdict asking the court to make this a domestic abuse interdict to protect them against someone who is, or was:

- their husband or wife
- civil partner
- living with them as if they were married
- in a relationship with the person

Housing providers are ideally placed to see any breaches of orders and interdicts as they carry out their housing management functions, so awareness of who should not be in the area will be essential and means that housing providers can report any breaches (and update case management systems). You should record any orders on your case management system and the dates they run from and to so you can provide evidence of any breaches.

**The Domestic Abuse Scotland Act (2021)** sets the conditions in relation to housing and Part Two gives grounds for ending a Scottish secure tenancy when a tenant has been abusive to their partner or ex-partner. The landlord can seek the permission of the court to end the tenancy if they plan to let the victim survivor continue to live in the house if they wish to remain there. The timetable for the enactment is not published. This part of the Act has not yet been enacted.

Shelter Scotland state that if the person wishes to remain in the rented home and they are not the tenant, or they are a joint tenant, they can apply to have the tenancy transferred into their name and become the sole tenant.

For married couples, the non-tenant spouse or joint tenant can apply to the court to become the sole tenant, under Section 13 of the **Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981**.

For civil partners, the non-tenant or joint tenant can apply to the court to become the sole tenant of the home. At this stage the court considers factors before in deciding to grant the transfer such as conduct of the partners and the needs of any children.

**The Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS)** gives people the right to ask about the background of their partner in relation to domestic abuse. It also allows concerned relatives and friends, the right to ask about someone's partner. DSDAS also gives Police Scotland the power to tell people that they may be at risk. This means Police can reach out to vulnerable people who may be at risk of harm of domestic abuse by their partner even when they have not asked for the information. The form can be accessed here: [scotland.police.uk/secureforms/disclosure](https://scotland.police.uk/secureforms/disclosure)

## Things To Consider

- Ensuring you record all information about a reported perpetrator of domestic abuse who may or may not be a tenant and ensuring case management system can highlight names of reported perpetrators when they may apply for housing or move in with another tenant.
- Partnership working with other agencies to ensure a coordinated community response is in place. For example, ensuring the organisation is informed when a Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DVPN) or Order (DVPO) is served.
- Staff having knowledge on restraining orders, DVPOs, DSDAS means they can inform potential victim survivors on support available to act against a perpetrator as well as what the organisation can do.
- Recording any restraining order or protection order the victim survivor may have in place on your system and reporting any breaches staff in your organisation might witness.
- Using all powers at your organisation's disposal. This might include powers usually associated with responding to ASB such as anti-social behaviour orders for example. Earlier in this document we mentioned not confusing domestic abuse as ASB and this remains the case. This point is for housing providers to examine what powers they often use for ASB cases for domestic abuse. This might be stopping someone from entering a home.

# Support to Access Behaviour Change Programmes.

In addition to taking enforcement action, it is important to be aware of any behaviour change opportunities in your local area for those it may be suitable for.

Respect is a UK charity that focuses on addressing the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse. Their aim is for those who perpetrate domestic abuse to stop, be held accountable and given the opportunity to change. Respect accredits behaviour change programmes and measures them against a set of standards within the accreditation framework to ensure safe, effective, and survivor-focused work with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Safelives (2020) point out that **less than 1%** of perpetrators receive a specialist intervention to challenge or change their behaviour. This lack of specialist interventions represents missed opportunities to step in to work with a perpetrator who is engaging in abusive behaviour to prevent them from moving on to continue the same behaviour with their next partner.

Project Mirabal (2015) is a programme of research, combining a multi-site longitudinal study of the impacts of perpetrator programmes. One of the questions it sought to answer was *'Do domestic violence perpetrator programmes (DVPPs) actually work in reducing men's violence and abuse and increasing the freedom of women and children'*.

The research used **six** different measures of success:

- 1

Reduction of physical violence.
- 2

Respectful relationships.
- 3

Expanded space for action (the ability of victim survivors to restore agency and freedom safely from abuse).
- 4

Decreased isolation.
- 5

Enhanced parenting.
- 6

Understanding the impact of domestic violence.

Outcomes were in the main positive whereby physical and sexual violence was 'not just reduced but ended for the majority of women' (Kelly and Westmarland, 2015)

- **30%** of women involved in the programme reported being made to 'do something sexual' they did not want to do in the three months before the programme started. This reduced to zero a year after men starting the programme.
- **29%** of women reported having a weapon used against them in the three months before the programme. This was reduced to **zero** a year after starting the programme.
- Reports from women who said they were slapped, punched or had something thrown at them reduced from **87% to 7%**. Fewer women reported being physically injured after the programme (**61% before and 2% after**).

Wydall and Clarke (2015) highlight the importance of housing for perpetrators, suggesting that rehousing perpetrators can have positive outcomes for both perpetrators and victims. They point out the importance of the coordinated community response, which prioritises the needs of victims while simultaneously addressing the behaviour of perpetrators.

## Case Study Restart Programme

Restart is an earlier intervention and accommodation pilot for those who are at risk of perpetrating or where there is domestic abuse within families who are in contact with children's social care. The intervention is designed to fully assess risk and potential for abuse alongside offering support and tools for use in the longer term. The Restart Project runs across six London Boroughs (Camden, Croydon, Havering, Sutton, Westminster and London Borough of Barking and Dagenham).

The programme provides earlier intervention for perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Restart approach has the option of providing alternative accommodation for the perpetrator where they may be residing with the victim-survivor or where they may have insecure housing. Restart provides four weeks of supportive temporary accommodation in a hotel, with a view to supporting perpetrators into accessing rehousing via local authority homeless teams in the boroughs. The four weeks accommodation may result in them accessing accommodation after this period and in some cases, there is potential to return to the family home. More information can be found here: [drivepartnership.org.uk/about-us/restart](https://drivepartnership.org.uk/about-us/restart)

## Things to Consider

- Does your domestic abuse policy cover your response to perpetrators of domestic abuse, including taking enforcement action and the opportunity to make engage with Respect accredited behaviour change programmes that may operate in your area.





# 7. Recruitment, Inductions and Supporting Staff

## Recruitment and Inductions

We have highlighted the importance of sending a clear message on your website and in newsletters to illustrate that the organisation takes domestic abuse seriously and tenants can expect a good response disclosing domestic abuse.

As well as demonstrating this externally to tenants the same importance must be placed on it internally so that staff know it is a key requirement of their role. This thinking needs to be at the very beginning of staff applying to work at your organisation. So, at the point of roles being advertised and within job descriptions, making it clear that it will be a requirement to work in a way that recognises domestic abuse is key. This can set a clear message to potential employees that this will be a requirement of the role, and that training is provided.

### Things to Consider

- Including recognising and responding to domestic abuse as part of job advertisements and job descriptions.
- Inductions set the tone of the organisation and demonstrate its values and a session of domestic abuse and what is expected needs to be part of the induction.
- Regular training and keeping domestic abuse on the agenda from a wider corporate perspective with a training log which records names and dates of training, as well as recording individual team meetings to ensure staff are engaged and kept updated on any law changes and good practice.

# Support for Staff Experiencing Domestic Abuse

As well as setting the scene so that employees are well equipped to recognise and respond to domestic abuse in tenants many organisations are recognising the role they can play in supporting staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Research by the TUC (2014) finds that 75% of those enduring domestic abuse are targeted at work. This abuse can range from harassing phone calls to abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced. The same research highlighted that of those who had experienced domestic abuse, over **40%** were prevented from getting to work by their abuser, most commonly through physical violence or restraint (**72%**) followed by threats (**68%**). The Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse [eida.org.uk](https://eida.org.uk) provides advice and support for organisations and is free to join.

Awareness that an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse can ensure appropriate support is provided and assist them to find a solution. The Local Government Association suggests the following points might be potential indicators:

- characteristically depressed, anxious, distracted, lacking in concentration, self-confidence or self-esteem
- changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason
- receiving repeated upsetting telephone calls or emails
- increased absenteeism or lateness and/or with unusual explanations

- repeatedly requiring time off for appointments
- excessive clothing
- repeated injuries or unexplained bruising
- avoiding lunch breaks or socialising outside work
- nervous on arrival and when leaving work
- reluctance to leave work at the end of the working day
- isolating themselves at work.

## Case Study Borders Domestic Abuse Network

A group of housing providers across the Scottish Borders took a partnership approach to their staff support (as well as tenants) for domestic abuse. As small providers they wanted to pool their collective knowledge and resources to develop a staff policy and train workplace champions across the organisations and build their knowledge as a collective so that staff in any of the organisations could seek support and signposting from any of the champion across the organisations. Senior leaders in the organisations led on this partnership highlighting its importance.

They collectively procured training to develop their understanding of domestic abuse and then added in more specific training to develop their collective Staff Domestic Abuse Policy.

## Things to Consider

It is recommended that organisations have a separate customer and a staff domestic abuse policy setting out the company's approach and offering a range of practical options for staff experiencing domestic abuse. Practical options might include:

- Offering flexible working arrangements for survivors.
- Changing work telephone numbers and email addresses as well as blocking the perpetrator's email address.
- Changing the place of employment where possible if your organisation has various sites.
- Supporting the victim survivor get to and from work safely.
- Offering paid leave if needed or time off to attend appointments.
- Joining up with other providers to form a network to collectively procure training and joint policy development.

# Useful Helplines and Websites

## Helplines

### **Scotland Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline**

0800 027 1234

### **Rape Crisis Scotland**

08088 010302

### **Victim Support Scotland**

0800 160 1985

### **Men's Advice Line**

0808 801 0327

### **Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS)**

03300 949 395

## Websites

### **Scottish Women's Aid**

[womensaid.scot](http://womensaid.scot)

[galop.org.uk](http://galop.org.uk)

[eida.org.uk](http://eida.org.uk)

Hestia - Bright Sky Application

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