

Domestic Abuse Policy	Policy
Approved by Chief Executive	Issue number 8
Approved date September 2024	Review date September 2026
	Responsible Officer Head of Housing

1.0	Introduction
1.1	This policy sets out Hightown's approach to dealing with domestic abuse. It applies to all tenants living in Hightown's general needs rented and shared ownership accommodation, and their household members where the tenant is the perpetrator.
1.1.1	In Care and Supported Housing services, cases of domestic abuse are generally dealt with under safeguarding measures, however where considered appropriate this policy will also apply.
1.2	Hightown has certain obligations as defined by the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard, and works co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.
1.3	Hightown is committed to taking action to support victim/survivors of domestic abuse, and has signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing's Make a Stand Pledge.
1.4	This policy aims to ensure that those who are subjected to domestic abuse are treated in a sympathetic, sensitive and confidential manner, in accordance with their needs. It aims to ensure all employees act in a non-judgemental way.
1.5	Hightown recognises the seriousness and complexity of domestic abuse and the importance of taking appropriate action in cases that are brought to the attention of the Association.
1.6	Hightown is committed to supporting all victim/survivors of domestic abuse and recognises that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality, ethnicity or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.
1.7	Hightown understands the importance of a multi-agency approach to tackling domestic abuse and supporting victim/survivors.
1.8	Hightown staff will work in partnership with external agencies and the Police to provide appropriate assistance and support victim/survivors of domestic abuse.

<p>1.9</p> <p>2.0</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>Hightown will meet safeguarding requirements in line with our existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>The purpose of this policy is to inform Hightown's procedures concerning domestic abuse.</p> <p>The policy outlines the importance of giving support and assistance to victim/survivors, and the need for staff to engage with other agencies to achieve this.</p>
<p>3.0</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p>Definitions and Scope</p> <p>Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:</p> <p>Any incident or pattern of incidents of abusive behaviour between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members.</p> <p>Abusive behaviour includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical or sexual abuse; • violent or threatening behaviour; • controlling or coercive behaviour; • economic abuse; • psychological, emotional or other abuse. <p>Controlling behaviour is defined in the Home Office Statutory Guidance Framework as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them 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.</p> <p>Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition also includes 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.</p>
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p>	<p>Support for victim/survivors</p> <p>Hightown will ensure that residents are able to report domestic abuse to us through a variety of methods, and will investigate all reports that we receive.</p> <p>Hightown will offer a face to face meeting, with an appropriately trained member of staff, to any victim/survivor reporting domestic abuse directly to Hightown staff within one working day of the report being made.</p> <p>Hightown will provide victim/survivors with information about other agencies that can offer further advice and support, and will offer to support victim/survivors to report the abuse to other appropriate agencies.</p> <p>Hightown will work with other agencies (e.g. Police, Local Authorities, Support Centres) to provide appropriate responses and services to those experiencing or affected by domestic abuse.</p>

4.5	The victim/survivor's permission will be sought before other agencies are involved or referrals made, except where there is a child or adult who may be at risk of harm.
4.6	Designated Hightown staff will monitor MARAC case lists, feeding in information to the chair about Hightown cases, or taking part in meetings where possible and appropriate.
4.7	Tenancy enforcement action will be taken where appropriate.
4.8	Hightown will support victim/survivors to stay in their homes, if they wish to do so.
4.9	Hightown will provide improved security to a tenant's home in conjunction with partner agencies, where required.
4.10	Hightown will support the tenant if they choose to apply to the Local Authority for rehousing under homelessness legislation, or refer the victim/survivor to other sources of housing support, such as Refuge.
4.11	Hightown may consider a management transfer for a victim/survivor in a general needs tenancy, where an appropriate alternative property is immediately available, if the request is made or supported by an appropriate professional agency such as Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), the Police, or another Domestic Abuse support agency or outreach service (such as the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDVA)). This will be considered in line with Hightown's Allocations and Lettings Policy.
4.12	Hightown will provide information about sources of support for victim/survivors considering civil legal action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse, such as an injunction order or non-molestation order. Hightown will signpost victim/survivors to sources of independent legal advice in relation to joint tenancies, where one of the joint tenants is a perpetrator of domestic abuse.
5.0	Action to deal with Domestic Violence
5.1	Housing Officers and Home Ownership Officers receive training on domestic abuse to ensure they understand priorities, required responses, and are up to date with current legislation and good practice.
5.1.1	Other Hightown staff receive domestic abuse awareness training to support them to identify cases which need to be referred to an Officer for investigation.
5.2	In cases where children are involved Hightown will report the domestic abuse under our child protection obligations.
5.3	File notes will be made of all reports of domestic abuse, and cases will be logged on Hightown's contact management system.
5.4	Hightown will maintain the confidentiality of those reporting domestic abuse. Staff are expected to consider the full range of options available to them to help protect the victim/survivor as effectively as possible.

<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Monitoring</p> <p>Cases of domestic abuse are logged on Hightown's contact management system, and case numbers are reported to the Senior Management team monthly.</p> <p>Domestic abuse cases are referred to Hightown's internal Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults meetings, in order to ensure that cases are monitored and progressed, or closed where necessary.</p>
<p>7.0</p>	<p>Legal/Regulatory Background</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Equality Act 2010 Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards (Neighbourhood and Community Standard)</p>
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Other considerations:</p> <p>An Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed in the review of this policy</p>
<p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> <p>9.4</p>	<p>Role and Responsibilities</p> <p>Housing Officers and Home Ownership Officers will take the lead in responding to reports of domestic abuse, working with residents affected and liaising with other agencies, making appropriate referrals to external agencies.</p> <p>Where action against the tenancy is required, the Officer and their line manager will agree the course of action to take.</p> <p>All staff have a responsibility to report any concerns about domestic abuse against a resident to the appropriate Housing or Home Ownership Officer.</p> <p>Hightown will be involved in Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) where a Hightown resident is on the case list as either a victim/survivor or a perpetrator of domestic abuse. The Head of Housing is the Strategic Lead for MARAC, at least one Officer in the Housing Team will be a Designated MARAC Officer and will represent Hightown at MARAC.</p>
<p>10.0</p>	<p>Policy/document References:</p> <p>Domestic Abuse procedure Allocations & Lettings Policy.</p>