



Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services

Housing Domestic Abuse Policy

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Whole document	Easy read – to be published for public. Introduction of Risk Assessment tools.	Review period and publish for public and introduction of tools.	October 2025

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Policy Summary

Nobody should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy, alongside our domestic abuse procedure, sets out our commitment to take efficient and effective action on all reports of domestic abuse. It explains how we provide tailored support to individuals, working in partnership with specialist agencies for a coordinated response. You can report domestic abuse to us through any contact method like our website, phone, email, in-person or in writing.

If you are in an emergency, always call police on 999. We want to improve safety for those affected by domestic abuse and help prevent further abuse by encouraging earlier reporting and rapid response. We take all domestic abuse reports seriously and have trained staff to manage them. We will always treat those experiencing abuse in an empathetic, supportive, and non-judgmental way.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and will hold perpetrators accountable. Our approach is survivor-centred, considering their views and ongoing safety when deciding the appropriate course of action.

Policy scope

This policy outlines Bristol City Council's response to domestic abuse for tenants, leaseholders, residents in temporary accommodation provided by the council, homeless applicants, and domestic abuse victims applying for housing through Home Choice Bristol. It aims to ensure all customers understand domestic abuse and the support available.

We are committed to tackling domestic abuse and the actions undertaken by Bristol City Council's Housing and Landlord Services will reflect and seek to embed the seven principles set out in the [Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse](#):

We will start with you and what's right for you.

There are a range of support services available and ways in which we can build safety with you. There will always be a person available to talk to you and help (This will be via Next Link's 24 hour phone service commissioned by the council).

If you have children, we will work with you to support you, to help you care for your children and keep them safe.

It's your home and we want you to be able to stay in your home, which means if you want the person who is hurting, scaring, or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action so that you can be safe.

If staying in your home isn't right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to help you to make that happen. Your physical and psychological safety are important to us.

In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse, and we will support survivors to feel safe, to recover, and to thrive.

It is everybody's responsibility to protect victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence – we all have a role to play in making sure Bristol is a zero-tolerance city where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.

Domestic Abuse is a serious social and criminal problem that has significant human and financial consequences for individuals, families, and communities. This policy uses the definition of Domestic Abuse as stated in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (see page 8).

Dealing with domestic abuse

We take all reports seriously as domestic abuse is a serious crime. We will treat those experiencing abuse with empathy, support and without judgment.

You can report domestic abuse through any normal contact method with the council, i.e. if you're a council tenant by telephone on 0117 922 2200, email at estates@bristol.gov.uk, or letter. We will ensure reporting is accessible by providing interpreters and translations to other languages/formats as needed.

After receiving a report, we will respond within 2 working days and consult with you on next steps. We have trained staff who will offer you an interview, considering your preferences, for example seeing an officer of the same gender, where someone of the same gender is available. We will agree on a safe contact method and times such as by phone, at our offices or another safe venue and we may agree safe words to ensure you are able to talk when we contact.

We will conduct a risk assessment using the accredited DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence) checklist to plan survivor and child support and make relevant safeguarding referrals following on from this (such as MARAC, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference referrals).

Our action

We have a zero-tolerance policy to domestic abuse and will hold perpetrators accountable through supporting legal action by providing evidence where necessary, taking action

against perpetrator's tenancies if safe and reasonable to do so, and making referrals to perpetrator programmes to challenge abusive behaviour and provide support to prevent it continuing. We will make it clear the abuse is never the survivor's or children's fault. Our support is based on the individual's needs, we take a survivor-centred approach considering their views and ongoing safety.

We will ensure you're aware of our response and agree to any actions like referrals for specialist support or home security enhancements based on the risk assessment. We will advise on courses of action for the immediate situation and longer-term. We will not pressure legal action unless you want to pursue it. This may include helping obtain non-molestation orders or possession proceedings.

We will record notes on our case management systems to aid with risk management and so these notes can be used if needed for legal action. We will ensure these notes will never be shared with a joint tenant, in order to ensure the safety of victims.

We will provide relevant advice on alternative housing, security measures, and support from specialists. We recognise that housing is one of the main factors why victims do not leave abusive homes. If you fear for your immediate safety, we will help you consider your housing options. If moving, we will work with you to identify lower-risk areas and still act against the perpetrator with your consent when safe.

Many cases also require safeguarding, which our trained staff will refer as needed to protect people. We will review cases until resolved to your satisfaction.

We'll provide ongoing support to survivors, families and witnesses to feel safe at home and in their community, this may include increased security measures through the Sanctuary Scheme, or support from specialist [Domestic Abuse support providers](#).

Partnership working

We collaborate with relevant organisations, accounting for each person's circumstances and possible appropriate actions.

We maintain a current list of local/national agencies that may advise, or support based on circumstances. We will refer you to our Welfare Rights & Money Advice team or recommend legal advice organizations if needed.

We will work with partners through the High-Risk Domestic Abuse process and share information with permission unless there are child/vulnerable adult safeguarding risks, and we have to refer as a duty of care. We will also partner with agencies supporting behaviour-changing programmes for perpetrators.

Awareness

We will widely publicise domestic abuse information - how to get help and the response to expect from us. We will provide this when tenants move in and support national awareness campaigns.

We will have ongoing staff training to spot potential signs and report concerns sensitively through our Domestic Abuse procedures to enable early detection and prevention.

Feedback and review

Consultation was undertaken with the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivors Forum and Shelter's Women's Action Group on this policy. It will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if legislation, best practice, or feedback shows a need.

We value resident views and get feedback through working groups and informal conversations to improve our approach.

Equalities

We will ensure accessible, inclusive services by providing varied reporting methods, arranging interpreters/translations to remove barriers.

Whilst we recognise the gendered nature of Domestic Abuse and where it sits within the wider context of violence against women and girls (VAWG) we will assist victims/ survivors irrespective of gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background and any other protected characteristic defined within the Equality Act 2010, responding in an anti-discriminatory manner and tailoring our approach to allow for the individual's intersecting needs.

We recognise that certain groups are disproportionately affected, more vulnerable or face specific abuse forms and cultural/other reporting barriers. We will account for this in the support provided.

We'll train staff on how domestic abuse differently impacts individuals and partner with specialist providers supporting varied needs, details of whom we will keep on [our website](#).

Roles and responsibilities

This policy covers all of Housing and Landlord Services and is owned by the Director of Homes and Landlord Services.

All staff involved employed by Bristol City Council's Housing and Landlord Services and all those contracted to undertake services on behalf of Housing and Landlord Services have a responsibility to ensure that Bristol is a zero-tolerance city where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.

Housing and Landlord Services staff should:

- Always act in accordance with Bristol City Council's Corporate Code of Conduct for Employees, which highlights the 'statutory requirement for the Council and its employees to protect children and vulnerable adults'.
- Be vigilant and aware of the definition of domestic abuse as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act (DAA) 2021 when dealing with both customers and colleagues.
- Undertake all domestic abuse training as well as any refresher courses and/or additional training that is required.
- Be aware of the fact that perpetrators may go to great lengths to find a victim/survivor. In view of this, all staff must adhere to confidentiality and disclosure procedures.
- Raise and report any concerns through their line manager.
- Keep factual records of any incident/concern.

All Managers and Team Leaders should ensure that:

- They contribute to developing an organisational culture where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.
- Staff are supported when dealing with stressful and distressing cases and given access to the Occupational Health Service as appropriate.
- That they and their staff have undertaken all relevant training on domestic abuse and any refresher training and/or additional training that may be required.
- They implement recommendations and/or any required changes to their services arising from the findings of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR), Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR) or any other relevant work of the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (KBSP) or the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group.
- Staff are not exposed to serious risk of harm and that health and safety at work guidelines are adhered to

Policy context

This policy supports Bristol's strategy on domestic abuse and violence against women and girls and the following Bristol City Council policies:

- Domestic Abuse SOP
- Corporate Strategy 2025-2030
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy (adults and children)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Home Choice Bristol Allocation Scheme Policy
- Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework 2023-2027
- Data protection policy
- Tenancy changes policy

Housing and Landlord Services recognises and acknowledges its legal duties and obligations under legislation relating to domestic violence. The following is not an exhaustive list, but some key legislation includes:

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- The Children Act 1989
- Housing Act 1996
- Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Crime & Disorder Act 1998 S.17
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015

Definitions

Definition of “Domestic Abuse” as per the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act

(1) This section defines “Domestic Abuse” for the purposes of this Act.

(2) 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.

(3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) “Economic Abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).”

Definition of “personally connected”.

(1) For the purposes of this Act, two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other.
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other.
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other.

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));

(g) they are relatives.