

# Domestic Abuse Policy-Customer 2025 - 2027

The Jigsaw logo, featuring a stylized geometric design of intersecting lines forming a square-like shape, with the word "Jigsaw" written in a bold, sans-serif font to its right.

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# 1 Aims

1. This policy sets out our approach to supporting customers who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.

# 2 Scope

2. This policy applies to all staff including senior managers, board members, paid employees, volunteers, agency staff, trainers, students, or anyone carrying out work on behalf of the Jigsaw Homes Group.
3. This policy sets out how we will deal with domestic abuse that affects our customers or their families and how we will assist survivors of domestic abuse. It also sets out the action we will consider taking against perpetrators of domestic abuse. This policy applies to all our customers and those living with them.
4. Jigsaw Homes Group recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. However, we also acknowledge that domestic abuse is not exclusive to women and girls, it can affect anyone, including men and individuals of all gender identities.
5. Our approach, as outlined in this policy, is designed to support all victims and survivors of domestic abuse equally, ensuring that everyone has access to appropriate protection, support, and resources. We will meet our statutory safeguarding requirements in line with our existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a vulnerable resident or customer.

# 3 Policy Statement

6. The Operational Director of Jigsaw Support is our senior leadership champion for domestic abuse, with responsibility for oversight and accountability across the organisation. We take domestic abuse seriously and are committed to providing a sensitive response to anyone approaching us for assistance.
7. This policy is intended to be comprehensive, clear, and accessible. It outlines our general approach to addressing domestic abuse.
8. While women and girls are disproportionately affected by all forms of VAWG, and some are gender specific such as Female Genital Mutilation, we will support those individuals experiencing VAWG or domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background, or any other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act
9. We will: -
  - Provide appropriate support, advice, and guidance to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

- Attempt to identify survivors at the earliest stages and will safely ask about any history of domestic abuse at the lettings interview. If a history is disclosed, additional security measures will be considered and any other support requirements explored.
- Enable residents to report domestic abuse to us in different ways, including in person, in writing, by telephone, online or via a third party such as a police officer or IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate).
- Ensure that survivors know that they can meet staff in confidence at our offices or at an agreed place of safety of their choice.
- Specialist teams in Neighbourhoods and Contracted Services will carry out a risk assessment (using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'- based violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist) (where this has not already been completed by another agency) and safety planning to provide support for the survivor and their children, who would be recognised as being victims of DA themselves if witness to or subject to abuse..
- Share information with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). We are participants in MARACs where information is shared between agencies involved in domestic abuse cases. Multi-Agency action plans are developed in response to high-risk cases. Where cases meet the MARAC risk rating threshold or if we have child protection concerns, we have a legal duty to share this with agencies. In cases where the threshold is not met, with the agreement of the survivor, we will make referrals for other support from relevant agencies. Agree an action plan with the survivor, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them.
- Provide improved security to a survivor's home (e.g., security lights, window locks) where a need is identified.
- Encourage people experiencing domestic abuse to access appropriate services as early as possible and give advice to allow them to make choices about what to do next.
- Support survivors to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- Ensure that when we rehouse survivors of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy.
- Ensure that where children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too have access to services as early as possible
- We will support Black and minoritised victims/survivors and those with protected characteristics to access information and support both within Jigsaw and through specialist services.

10. This will be delivered through clear guidance in our separate Domestic Abuse procedure.

## 4 Definition

11. Jigsaw Homes adopts the definition of domestic abuse outlined by the Home Office which makes clear any behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if-
12. (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
13. (b) the behaviour is abusive.
14. This definition ‘personally connected’ ensures that domestic abuse protections apply not only to current partners but also to:
  - Ex-partners
  - Family members
  - Co-parents
  - Those in non-marital intimate relationships
15. It also clarifies that cohabitation is not required as abuse can occur even if the individuals live separately.
16. The full statutory definition is contained within the appendix

### 4.1. Values and Principles

17. This Policy has been prepared with a commitment to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance values and principles of:
18. Values
  - Integrity
  - Collaboration
  - Empathy
  - Empowerment
  - Respect
  - Accountability
19. Principles
  - Non-judgement and belief
  - Being person centered
  - Amplifying victim/survivor Voice
  - Victim/survivor safety
  - Working towards a Coordinated Community Response

## 5 Our Approach

### 5.1. Responding to a Report of Domestic Abuse

20. Concerns about or reports of domestic abuse could be reported to any member of Jigsaw Homes staff, or a contractor/agent. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that information is logged properly, and a concern raised as stated within our DA Procedure.
21. When a member of Jigsaw staff suspects or witnesses domestic abuse taking place in our homes or neighbourhoods, they must refer it as a concern and ring the police if there is a current threat to any individual. We will provide clear guidance and training for all relevant staff on how to be alert to the symptoms and signs of domestic abuse and how to report their concerns. Our contractors and agents will also be required to be alert to the symptoms and signs of domestic abuse and report them to Jigsaw Homes.
22. On receiving a report of domestic abuse directly from a survivor, an interview with the survivor will be attempted within 24 hours (same-sex interviews will be facilitated where requested). Where this is not possible due to the weekend, or a bank holiday, the person will be referred to a relevant support agency or interviewed on the next available working day. Where a report of domestic abuse is received via a professional third party e.g., a police officer, we will seek to establish from the third party what details have been taken from the survivor, what support is in place and what is required from us. Where required, we will then contact the survivor directly and offer an interview as above.
23. We will ensure that the survivor is aware of referrals that will be made on their behalf from the beginning of the process and seek agreement from them to any referrals.

### 5.2. Addressing the Concern

24. Concerns will be processed as a safeguarding case and allocated to the Neighbourhood Safety team and/or Jigsaw Support Team, where applicable who, following the initial interview will determine if sufficient support is in place and if it is necessary to keep the case open within Jigsaw Homes.
25. All interviews and actions will be recorded using either the REACT or Ecco (Jigsaw Support) recording system.

#### Carrying out Initial Interview

- Interviews will be carried out in a sensitive and supportive manner
- Immediate housing options and tenancy rights will be discussed
- Contact with the police and medical services will be discussed
- A DASH Risk Identification Checklist will be completed, where required

- A referral to MARAC will be made if the threshold is met
- Advice on support available will be given (National Centre for Domestic Violence, Women's Aid, Citizens Advice Bureau etc.)

26. At the end of this interview, the officer should agree with the survivor what action will be taken.

### Further Action

27. The officer dealing with the case will ensure that contact is maintained with the survivor until they feel that support from Jigsaw Homes is no longer necessary, as they will be fully supported by an IDVA team or another agency. Further contact with them may need to include discussion on issues such as: -

- Local IDVA Service
- Contacting the police if not already done so
- Longer term housing options
- Advice on welfare benefits
- Legal action to be taken against the perpetrator
- Re-housing options
- Referral to Women's Aid

28. Where possible, we will assist and support the survivors to enable them to remain in their home. In some cases, however, the survivor may feel unable to return to their home, either in the immediate or long term. An example could be if the perpetrator remains in the property or in the locality of the property. We have limited provision for emergency or temporary housing. If the survivor cannot return home and has nowhere else to stay, advice will be offered regarding options for rehousing with the local authority or other agency.

29. For moves outside the local authority the Lettings and Tenancy Officer will advise the following of the move: -

- Domestic abuse lead for the local authority
- Public Protection Investigation Unit (PPIU)
- New housing provider

30. If the survivor is the sole tenant, consideration will be given to a rehousing request. The appropriate officer will decide whether the request will qualify as a management move.

- 31. Where a management move is offered to a survivor, this will normally be on a 'like for like' basis and where possible, depending on the wishes of the survivor, away from their local area dependent on risk and the views of the local IDVA service. This includes a commitment to offering the same level of tenure to any individual fleeing domestic violence, whether that is an existing tenant or someone coming to Jigsaw Homes Group. All survivors of domestic abuse will be given priority for rehousing.
- 32. We will aim to provide on-going support to survivors of domestic abuse whilst required, by ensuring that contact is maintained and by ensuring that the survivor is referred to other specialist agencies that can provide support.

### Legal Action Against the Perpetrator

- 33. The Housing Act 1996 created the power for housing associations to evict a perpetrator of domestic abuse, whether they are a joint or sole tenant of the property.
- 34. This option will usually be considered where the survivor (and his/her dependents) has left the property, and the perpetrator remains in a property. Consideration also needs to be given to the likely success of the action based on what evidence is available.
- 35. The option to evict a perpetrator will be discussed with the survivor, and they will be reassured of necessary support from the company or other agencies.
- 36. Approval to seek a possession order should be sought from the Operational Director of Neighbourhoods and considerations such as under-occupation or the perpetrator's possible vulnerability will be considered. Injunctions against the perpetrator can be sought by the survivor and the Company on their behalf. In cases of domestic abuse, an injunction would normally involve the perpetrator not being allowed to come into the locality of the survivor's home.

### 5.3. Damage to and Security of the Property

- 37. We will consider arranging and paying for additional security of a property so that a domestic abuse survivor feels safe to return. This may include items such as lock changes or additional door or window locks.
- 38. Where the police wish to install additional security, permission will be given immediately subject to the agreement on who will maintain such items.
- 39. In cases where the property has been damaged by a perpetrator of domestic abuse, repairs will be carried out by the company in line with the repairs policy.
- 40. Where appropriate, the company may seek to take direct action against the perpetrator and report the damage to the police as a crime.

### 5.4. Multi Agency Approach

- 41. We acknowledge that dealing with issues of Domestic Abuse requires a multi-agency approach and will endeavour to work with any appropriate local agencies in individual cases to ensure cases are dealt with in the most effective and efficient way.

- 42. We will actively engage in good practice when dealing with domestic abuse, such as making referrals to MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) and following any recommendations or action plans that may arise from them.

## **5.5. Training**

- 43. As part of our commitment to safeguarding, domestic abuse awareness training will be mandatory for all Jigsaw Homes staff.
- 44. We will ensure all front-line officers receive training in relation to domestic abuse, how to spot the signs of potential domestic abuse, and how to escalate their concerns.
- 45. We will train our staff who deal with rents and financial advice, to spot the signs of economic and financial abuse, and to support survivors where this abuse has been identified.
- 46. Staff training will include our approach to dealing with reported perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 47. We will ensure that those officers dealing directly with domestic abuse survivors are appropriately trained and resourced so that they can deal with reports confidently and competently. We will ensure that these staff members also have the option of one-to-one support on a regular basis to monitor their own wellbeing.
- 48. Training will be reviewed and relaunched with any changes in legislation.

## **5.6. Safeguarding**

- 49. A considerable number of adults who are referred as a safeguarding case are often experiencing domestic abuse in some form. Despite the overlap between supporting abuse survivors and safeguarding adults, the two have developed separate professional practices.
- 50. If domestic abuse is an isolated issue and there are no other safeguarding concerns, then support can be sought via forums such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).
- 51. If, however, there is more than one safeguarding issue present, such as domestic abuse in addition to physical or mental health issues then a referral should be made to the Local Authority Safeguarding team so that services can be coordinated to deal with the potentially complex issues.
- 52. We recognise the devastating impact that domestic abuse can have on children exposed to it in their own home. Part 1 of the new Domestic Abuse Act provides that a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator, is also to be regarded as a survivor of domestic abuse.
- 53. This means that in domestic abuse cases where children are present, practitioners have a duty to involve Children's Services to ensure any children are adequately safeguarded.

54. Operatives in all roles identifying signs of abuse in children and adults will raise their concerns to the Neighbourhood Safety Team who will refer to statutory services to safeguard their emotional and physical safety.

### **5.7. Raising Awareness**

55. We will publish our domestic abuse policy and promote awareness of the services available to our customers through regular communication campaigns, highlighting the theme and what Jigsaw does to address the risks, ensuring that these are easily accessible to residents and staff.

### **5.8. Caring for Our Employees**

56. Jigsaw Homes has clear policies in place in relation to the welfare of employees and wholeheartedly supports employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse. We will offer flexible working arrangements and paid leave for employees affected by domestic abuse, along with clear referral pathways to internal and external support. A separate Policy for colleagues is available. Any employee who requires support can contact their line manager or a member of the People team.

### **5.9. Confidentiality/Data Sharing**

57. We recognise that incidents of domestic abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for survivors to report and will endeavor to deal with such cases confidentially where possible.
58. We may however share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, to deal with cases more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the survivor and/or their dependents to provide better or more effective support.
59. The Data Protection Act 2018 includes 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent.
60. Information can be shared legally without consent, if any individual is unable to, cannot be expected to gain consent from the individual, or if gaining consent could place a child at risk.
61. Relevant personal information can be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional, or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

### **5.10. Intersectional & Anti-Racist Practice**

62. When dealing with survivors of domestic abuse, we will ensure we take an intersectional approach. We will consider a collection of factors that would affect an individual in combination rather than in isolation. An example of these factors includes gender, sex, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, disability, weight, and

physical appearance. We are aware that these intersecting and overlapping social identities may be both empowering and discriminating.

63. As an organisation we recognise the impact of the intersecting inequalities which, according to research by [Women's Aid](#) specifically leave Black and Minoritised women more likely to experience violence and less able to access support, attention, and justice. We ensure that our practice challenges and addresses racism across our organisation.

## 6 Monitoring and Delivery

64. Domestic abuse would be considered a safeguarding concern and as such would be monitored in line with the safeguarding policy.
65. The safeguarding lead will be responsible for monitoring effective and consistent implementation of the safeguarding policy and associated procedures across the Group. This can include internal audits and will foster principles of continuous improvement, and the analysis of satisfaction returns from customers accessing our services. The safeguarding lead will produce a quarterly report via our internal monitoring dashboard.
66. We will identify and address barriers that prevent survivors from accessing support, such as language barriers and lack of culturally appropriate services.
67. This policy and associated procedures and guidance will be reviewed every two years or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, regulatory changes, national policy changes, or there is an operational need to do so. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off and clearly communicated to the wider Jigsaw Group staff as well as our tenants and residents.

## 7 Legislation and Regulation

68. This policy is informed by the following legislation and regulations: -
- RSH Regulatory Consumer Standards
  - Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
  - Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
  - Serious Crime Act 2015
  - Crime and Security Act 2010
  - Family Law Act 1996
  - Civil Partnership Act 2004
  - Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025

## 8 Related Policies and Procedures

- Allocations Policy
- ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) Policy and Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- People Strategy
- Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy
- Service Adjustments Policy

## 9 Document Control

|                        |                                                                                                            |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Responsible Officer/s: | Donna Kelly, Group Director of Neighbourhoods & Support<br>Ivan Wright, Operations Director Neighbourhoods |
| Date of Approval:      | 6 August 2025                                                                                              |
| Approved by:           | Executive Management Team                                                                                  |
| To be Reviewed Every:  | Two years                                                                                                  |

# Appendices

## A Types of Domestic Abuse

- A.1. Jigsaw Homes adopts the definition of domestic abuse outlined by the Home Office, as below;
- A.2. **1 Definition of “domestic abuse”**
- A.3. (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- A.4. (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.
- A.5. (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;
- A.6. and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- A.7. (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
  - (b) obtain goods or services.
- A.8. (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).
- A.9. (6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.
- A.10. (7) For the meaning of “personally connected,” see section 2.
- A.11. **2 Definition of “personally connected”**
- A.12. (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));

A.13. they are relatives.

A.14. (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if-

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

A.15. (3) In this section-

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “Civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- “Parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

### 3 Children as Victims of Domestic Abuse

A.16. (1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.

A.17. (2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who-

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

A.18. (3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if-

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

A.19. (4) In this section-

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “Parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

A.20. What constitutes domestic abuse is commonly misunderstood and it is important to remember that no single act defines it. There are a wide range of activities and behaviours that amount to domestic abuse which are often dangerous and can be life-threatening. Some examples of these are: -

### **A.1. Controlling Behaviour**

A.21. This is 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.

### **A.2. Coercive Behaviour**

A.22. Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

A.23. Coercive and controlling behaviour is a sustained pattern of behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse. Victims of coercive control can have every aspect of life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and humiliation. Coercive and controlling behaviour underpins domestic abuse. These behaviours are often used as the primary mechanisms for achieving power and control in an abusive relationship and these behaviours reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse.

A.24. Coercive and controlling behaviour is now a criminal offence under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015

### **A.3. Harassment**

A.25. This is a crime involving behaviour that takes place more than once, and the perpetrator’s actions must have an unwanted effect on the victim. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it is an offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment of another person, and that they know (or ought to know) what amounts to harassment. The Act defines harassment and states: “References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress.” A ‘course of conduct’ in the case of harassment of a single person must involve conduct on at least two occasions.

#### **A.4. Stalking**

- A.26. There is no specific legal definition of stalking. However, it is helpful to know that in cases of stalking there is a pattern of unwanted, fixated, and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress.

#### **A.5. Physical Abuse**

- A.27. Can include: - hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing, or shoving, cutting, or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.

#### **A.6. Sexual Abuse**

- A.28. Can include: - rape and coerced sex; forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts; refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception; threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.

#### **A.7. Economic Abuse**

- A.29. Can include: -controlling money and bank accounts; making a victim account for all their expenditure; running up debts in a victim's name; allowing no say on how monies are spent; refusing to allow them to study or work.

#### **A.8. Psychological and Emotional Violence and Abuse**

- A.30. This has a profound impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with little confidence that they can do anything to change the situation. Examples include: -
- A.31. Creating isolation: e.g., not allowing them to see other people, preventing them from making their own friendships; not allowing them to go anywhere on their own; causing them to be depressed and then using this against them.
- A.32. Use of threats: e.g., threats to kill their family, children, friends, pets; to throw them out and keep the children; to find them if they ever leave; to have them locked up; to tell everyone they are mad.
- A.33. Putting them down: - e.g., humiliating and undermining them in front of others or in front of their children; telling them they are stupid, hopeless, unlovable, that no one would believe them, or that they are a bad parent.

#### **A.9. Discriminatory Abuse**

- A.34. May manifest itself as any of the other categories of abuse, however what makes discriminatory abuse distinctive is it is motivated by oppressive and discriminatory attitudes towards a person's: -

- A.35. • Disability
- A.36. • Physical appearance
- A.37. • Learning disability
- A.38. • Mental ill-health
- A.39. • Sensory impairment
- A.40. • Race
- A.41. • Religion
- A.42. • Gender/gender identity
- A.43. • Age
- A.44. • Culture
- A.45. • Sexual orientation
- A.46. • Appearance

## **A.10. Family and Inter-Generational Domestic Abuse**

- A.47. Approaches have traditionally focused upon heterosexual partner abuse and more recently have been seen to address abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender relationships. More focus is required to address family and inter-generational abuse, and how it differs from partner abuse, for example if the perpetrator is the victim's teenage or adult sibling, child, or grandchild.
- A.48. Careful consideration is required when dealing with family and intergenerational abuse due to the complexities of family composition and safeguarding implications.

## **A.11. Elder Abuse**

- A.49. Elder abuse can be detrimental to a survivor's wellbeing due to problems with mobility, mental health, and social isolation. Older people may have come to accept some aspects of domestic abuse as the 'norm' dependent upon their generation.

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