

Wandsworth Council Domestic Abuse Policy for the Resident Services Directorate delivering Housing Services

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1. Introduction

The Resident Services Department adopts a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of domestic abuse. We recognise the devastating impact it has on victims and survivors, their families, and the wider community. Supporting those affected requires sensitivity to the complex and often hidden nature of abuse. It is never the fault of the victim or survivor. Furthermore, domestic abuse is sadly prevalent within the home, and access to safe, secure housing can be a vital lifeline that enables individuals to rebuild their lives. Housing services therefore play a crucial role in providing support and protection.

In the year ending March 2024¹, approximately 2.3 million people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales. Locally, between April 2024 and March 2025, 641 victims/survivors in Wandsworth approached housing services due to abuse-related homelessness, representing 12% of all homeless approaches. Of these households, 29% had children living in the home, which demonstrates the essential need to have an effective and embedded domestic abuse service.

This policy is intended for staff delivering domestic abuse services, residents who require assistance when at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse, and their relatives or friends who are directly or indirectly impacted. It is also for partner organisations involved in delivering domestic abuse related services and includes our approach to perpetrator management. The policy outlines how we will respond to domestic abuse, support victims and survivors, hold perpetrators to account, and work collaboratively with partner organisations to develop robust safety plans.

Our approach is rooted in empathy and compassion, supporting the corporate aim of creating safer neighbourhoods where communities, victims, and survivors feel confident, protected, and supported. Reaching out for help is often one of the hardest steps a victim or survivor will take, and our response can have a profound impact. A compassionate service fosters safety, trust and contributes to effective safety planning. In contrast, a dispassionate, cold or negative response can be deeply damaging and may discourage victims/survivors from seeking help.

Partnership working is central to our approach to ensure that our policies, procedures, and practices reflect the voices and needs of victims/survivors. This policy has been shaped by feedback from our partners at Refuge², the Community Safety team who deliver the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy³ (VAWG), Social Care Services, and – most importantly – survivors who have received support from our housing teams.

¹ ONS report:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenlandandwalesoverview/november2024>

² Refuge are a domestic abuse advocacy charity and the Council commissioned Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service provider - <https://refuge.org.uk/i-need-help-now/richmond-wandsworth-better-service-partnership/>

³ Wandsworth VAWG strategy is coordinated through the Stronger and Safer Communities team and focuses on prevention, support, and multi-agency collaboration.

We fully support the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) mission to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse and have aligned our policies and procedures to help us meet their standards.

2. Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to enhance the safety of victims and survivors who are experiencing, at risk of, or have been affected by domestic abuse. It achieves this by ensuring that all professionals who are supporting victims/survivors of abuse are equipped with the skills and pathways to do so in a trauma-informed manner. It further outlines our commitment to safeguarding residents by setting out team responsibilities, response procedures, and the support available to prevent and reduce the impact of abuse. This includes:

- **Protecting victims/survivors** by offering responsive housing services and empathetic, victim-led assessments, alongside a range of housing options.
- **Intervening early to support recovery**, ensuring survivors receive timely and appropriate help that addresses their emotional, psychological, and practical needs.
- **Providing consistent wraparound support beyond housing**, coordinated across internal and external partners to promote long-term wellbeing and stability.
- **Developing safety plans** that is informed and led by the victim/survivor.
- **Completing SafeLives DASH Risk Assessments⁴** in a safe and secure environment with the victim/survivor. This will inform referrals for coordinated support e.g. to services such as Refuge, MARAC (see [section 8](#)), and other relevant support providers.
- **Embedding the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance⁵ (DAHA) standards and practices** across all our teams and promoting the DAHA mission among internal and external partners.
- **Hold perpetrators to account** in a safe, proportionate, and proactive manner that protects victims and survivors, reduces the risk of further abuse, and encourages rehabilitation.

3. Domestic Abuse and Legal Framework

⁴ The SafeLive DASH Risk Assessment is an industry recognised checklist to support professionals in identifying the level of risk to victims - <https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Dash-without-guidance.pdf>

⁵ The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance provides a nationally recognised framework for housing providers to deliver high-quality, survivor-centred responses to domestic abuse. To learn more, visit <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/>

We adhere to the Government's statutory definition of domestic abuse as set out in the [Domestic Abuse Act \(2021\)](#).

To summarise, domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of behaviour where one person (aged 16 or over) engages in abusive behaviour towards another person (also aged 16 or over) with whom they are personally connected. Two individuals are personally connected if any of the following apply:

- They are, or have been, married to each other.
- They are, or have been, civil partners.
- They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship.
- They are relatives (including parents, children, siblings, and extended family).
- They have, or have had, parental responsibility for the same child.

Importantly, the Act does not require the individuals to be living in the same household for the abuse to be recognised. This broadens the scope to include ex-partners and non-cohabiting family members, which is particularly relevant in cases involving honour-based abuse or post-separation coercive control.

The Act also explicitly recognises that a child (under 18 years old) is considered a victim of domestic abuse in their own right if they **see, hear, or experience the effects** of abuse occurring between two adults.

This statutory definition applies across England and Wales. It recognises the wide-ranging nature of abuse and the importance of addressing non-physical forms of harm, such as coercive control and economic abuse (see [section 4](#) below).

The Act is embedded throughout our housing services and informs Chapter 21 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance⁶ and Council Allocations Scheme. These outline duties relating to priority need, local connection, allocation of social housing, and support for victims/survivors fleeing abuse.

4. Types of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can take many forms, and it is not just limited to physical forms of abuse or violence. Abuse is often complex and overlapping, and this may be heightened for victims and survivors from diverse or vulnerable backgrounds due to their race, sex or disability (see [section 10](#)). The different types of abuse as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are listed below along with the warning signs of abuse, although this is not an exhaustive list.

Physical or sexual abuse – this includes any act of violence or unwanted sexual activity such as hitting, slapping, kicking, punching, choking, and forced sexual acts. Sexual abuse can also be carried out virtually, for example via messages, telephone calls or social media.

Warning signs: unexplained injuries, fearfulness, withdrawal.

⁶For more information, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-21-domestic-abuse>

Violent or threatening behaviour – this is demonstrated by behaviour that causes fear or intimidation, even if no physical harm occurs. This includes threats to harm the victim/survivor, their children, or pets, and vandalising property or personal belongings. The abuse can also be more subtle, such as depriving the victim/survivor of sleep or blackmailing them.

Warning signs: fear of partner's reactions, threats to harm or property damaged.

Coercive and controlling behaviour – the perpetrator will behave in ways that are designed to make a person feel subordinate or dependent on them. This includes assaulting, threatening, humiliating, or/and intimidating them. For example, they may threaten the person to reveal private information thus forcing them to behave in a certain way under duress. They may also isolate the person from friends and family, monitor their movements, and restrict access to money, food or transport.

Warning signs: becoming isolated from friends/family, absence from work, showing fear of behaving in a certain way (and of the consequences) and changing the way one dresses.

Economic abuse – occurs when a perpetrator controls a person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain money or other economic resources. This can include interfering with the victim/survivor's employment, and restricting access to education or immigration services. For example, a perpetrator may prevent someone from working, take control of their wages, accrue debt in their name, or block access to bank accounts.

Warning signs: having no access to money or restricted from applying for benefits.

Psychological and emotional abuse – this is behaviour that causes emotional harm or undermines a person's sense of self-worth. This can be in the form of constant criticism, gaslighting, name-calling, bullying or manipulation. This form of abuse is subtle and often used to cloak other forms of abuse.

Warning signs: having low confidence, high anxiety or feeling guilty for no reason.

“Honour-based” violence and abuse – this is abuse committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of a family or community, examples include forced marriage and female genital mutilation. This form of abuse can often involve multiple perpetrators, including extended family or community members, and can be very difficult for victims/survivors to speak out against.

Warning signs: being pressured into a relationship/marriage, fear of family/community retaliation.

Stalking and harassment – the perpetrator will demonstrate obsessive, repeated, and unwanted behaviour that causes fear, distress, or alarm. This includes repeated calls or messages, following the victim, sending unwanted or malicious gifts, monitoring movements, or using technology to track or/and intimidate.

Warning signs: suspicion of being followed or receiving excessive and unwanted messages, calls, emails or social media posts.

5. Reporting of Domestic Abuse

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse can report concerns through multiple channels, with no single 'correct' route. Staff are trained to respond empathetically and act as either the victim/survivor's primary or secondary point of contact. Staff will guide them through their options and ensure appropriate referrals. See [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) for more information about the reporting routes and pathways.

Key reporting pathways include:

Police and Emergency Services

If in immediate danger, the victim/survivor or person/professional supporting them should call 999.

If the victim/survivor is trying to make a call but are unable to talk, then they can press 55 to make a silent call⁷.

Victims and survivors can register for the emergency SMS service to text 999 if there is an emergency. More information on how to register can be found online⁸.

Call 101 for non-emergencies.

Council - Housing Teams

The homelessness and temporary accommodation teams support victims and survivors who are homeless or at risk due to domestic abuse, including those experiencing abuse within Council-provided temporary housing.

Wandsworth Council tenants can report abuse to their Estate Manager, who will offer support and explore housing options. If rent arrears are linked to domestic abuse, the Council Income Maximisation Team and Tenancy Support Service can provide tailored assistance to help sustain the tenancy.

Housing officers from all teams are responsible for signposting victims/survivors to appropriate wraparound/therapeutic services, in addition to providing housing support. This is to ensure a consistent and holistic approach.

See [section 6](#) below for more information.

Services that support victims and survivors of domestic abuse

⁷ Please follow this link to learn more about making a silent call: <https://www.met.police.uk/contact/how-to-make-a-silent-999-call/>

⁸ Please follow this link to learn how to register for the emergency SMS service: <https://www.relayuk.bt.com/how-to-use-relay-uk/contact-999-using-relay-uk.html>

Below is a list of core services available within the borough. See [Appendix 1](#) for more information about these services including their contact details.

Refuge Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service: specialist advocacy and coordinated support is offered via Refuge throughout the borough.

One Stop Shop: weekly drop-in sessions offer safe and impartial advice from IDVAs and housing officers and these services can be accessed anonymously.

Children and Adult Social Care: vulnerable adults and children may be referred for safeguarding assessments.

Sanctuary Schemes: these schemes help tenants stay safe in their homes by the Council adding safety measures (e.g. doorbell cameras, lock changes) to their homes. Landlord consent is required.

GPs and Charities: victims and survivors may seek support through medical professionals or local/national charities, which can also support police investigations.

Other specialist services can be found on the Council webpage⁹.

Staff will coordinate their responses with relevant agencies based on the victim/survivor's needs and consent, ensuring safety and confidentiality throughout.

6. Support and Response Framework

We have zero tolerance for domestic abuse and are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for any resident seeking support. Our approach is trauma-informed following the guidance of our partners, victim-led by taking the victim/survivor's needs into account, and coordinated with partner agencies to deliver a safe, empathetic and sensitive service. All housing teams are expected to be familiar with the different services on offer so they can signpost to ensure the most appropriate support can be offered. See Appendices [1](#), [2](#), [3](#) and [4](#) for more information about contacting the teams, accessing resources and how the pathways work.

Initial support and risk assessment

Staff are trained to recognise all forms of abuse and respond appropriately. With the victim/survivor's consent, a SafeLives DASH risk checklist will be completed (or a recent summary requested if completed by another professional) to assess risk and inform referrals. Referrals may include the IDVA service, MARAC, or other specialist agencies. This is done to protect the victim/survivor, and any referral will likely feed in to future safety planning that will be coordinated by our staff and partners.

Safeguarding and safety planning

⁹ Please visit the Council webpages for a full list of these services:

<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/community-safety/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-support-services/>

Staff will identify safeguarding concerns and refer to social care services if a child is involved. For children's safeguarding, housing staff are part of the **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** and follow statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and Children Act 1989 to respond to safeguarding concerns. Safety plans are developed in collaboration with the victim/survivor and partner agencies, and may include emergency accommodation, sanctuary schemes, management transfers (e.g. emergency social housing moves), or refuge placements.

Homelessness and housing support

Victims/survivors who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, can apply to any local authority. IDVAs and other professionals have a duty to refer victims/survivors for housing assistance.

The homelessness pathway can be long, uncertain, and emotionally challenging. Victims/survivors may face significant life changes, including extended periods in temporary accommodation. They will undergo assessments that explore the nature of the abuse and the circumstances leading to their homelessness. Staff will manage these cases with professionalism and sensitivity, applying a trauma-informed approach to ensure safety and wellbeing.

Where appropriate, interim accommodation¹⁰ will be offered, and Personal Housing Plans will be developed to include safety planning and referrals. Victims/survivors will not be required to provide evidence of abuse or documentation, however, once they are safe, staff have a statutory duty to conduct in-depth homelessness investigations.

Temporary accommodation

Where emergency placements are needed, staff will offer clear advice and complete a suitability assessment for accommodation provision. The team will do everything possible to provide suitable accommodation and will always consider the needs of the victim/survivor and any children when sourcing a placement. However, due to availability constraints, there may be occasions where victims/survivors are placed outside the borough or in shared facilities on a short-term basis, such as shared kitchens or bathrooms. In such cases, staff will provide ongoing support and work towards relocating the victim/survivor to more suitable accommodation. If a placement becomes unsafe, victims/survivors are encouraged to contact staff, who will respond the same day to provide support and assess the situation. Where necessary, staff will complete a new SafeLives DASH risk checklist.

Information and advice will be provided to the victim/survivor when they are placed in interim accommodation. This will include guidance on how to seek assistance from the team, details of available support services, and an overview of what to expect from housing services during their placement.

¹⁰ Homeless applicants who are eligible for housing assistance automatically have a priority need, which includes access to interim accommodation.

Housing Management and Tenancy Support Service

Wandsworth Council tenants are encouraged to contact their Estate Manager for support, and their housing options will be explored. This includes the sanctuary schemes, Homefinder Revive, mutual exchange schemes (e.g. exchanging homes with another social tenant) and management transfers (e.g. emergency social housing transfers).

If a management transfer is approved and the victim/survivor needs to move urgently, interim accommodation can be arranged while awaiting a property offer.

The Council Tenancy Support Service is a free service for our Council tenants. They offer one-to-one support on housing related matters to those who are at risk of eviction or court proceedings due to abuse-related rent arrears.

7. Multi-Agency Working, Information Sharing and Consent

Multi-agency working is embedded across our services. Staff are expected to collaborate with partner agencies to develop safety plans that are survivor-led and tailored to individual needs. With the victim/survivor's consent, housing staff will facilitate the involvement of partners and support networks in housing-related assessments and meetings.

We actively participate in multi-agency forums that promote best practice, strengthen partnership working, and raise awareness of local and national domestic abuse strategies. This includes working alongside the Council's Community Safety team (responsible for delivering the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy¹¹), the Police, Social Care Services, Refuge and other local and national charities.

Refuge is the Council commissioned IDVA service provider and our primary partner in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse. We have a co-location agreement with Refuge which includes an IDVA working in the housing office once a week. Each party has agreed to share essential information with each other where consent is given, and if a SafeLives Dash risk checklist has been completed by one party, then a summary of the assessment will be shared with the other.

Referrals to Refuge and other partners will be proportionate to the urgency of the victim/survivor's needs. For example, referrals to the Refuge IDVA service or Children and Adult Social Care Services must be made immediately if the person is at risk of serious harm or requires urgent safety planning, whereas non-urgent cases may be referred following initial assessment and coordination with other services.

Information request and response times

Sharing information is essential to delivering an effective service. Timeframes for responses must be proportionate to the urgency of the request, which is based on

¹¹ The VAWG strategy can be accessed online - <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/community-safety/vawg/violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy/>

the victim/survivor's report and professional judgement. Services must not require victims/survivors to provide 'proof' of abuse before support is offered.

We aim to respond to information sharing requests within the following timeframes, and we expect partner agencies to do the same:

Priority	Information request / referral / joint working request
High urgency Where an individual is at risk of serious harm in their home, temporary accommodation or if street homeless.	The same working day
Medium urgency Where individual/professionals wish to raise a concern about risk of harm or significant threat to the individual.	3 working days
Low urgency A standard request for information, for joint working or other standard communications.	5 working days

Storing information, data and consent

Capturing and storing accurate information is essential to inform safety planning and ensure coordinated support. Named staff contacts are available should a partner or staff member require advice on information sharing.

Information will only be shared between agencies with the victim/survivor's consent. Consent is not required however when making a MARAC referral or if a safeguarding referral is considered to be 'high risk' (see [section 8](#)). Any information that is shared must be factual and strictly relevant to the case. Staff will log all information requests and responses for audit and safeguarding purposes.

Staff will gather perpetrator details safely to support risk management, legal action and enforcement (see the section on perpetrator management). Victim/survivor contact details will be handled with care, ensuring safe communication methods.

Staff will be proactive and provide support to the victim/survivor if a partner has not responded to a request. For example, staff will not delay providing assistance to a victim/survivor if a response has not been received from a partner agency following a request. If needed, staff will follow the agreed escalation pathways.

All shared information is securely stored on internal systems and is treated confidentially. Access to sensitive data can be restricted to designated staff members where required for safety. Information is retained in line with the Council's Records Management Policy and Corporate Retention Schedule¹², in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

¹² Visit our webpage for more information: <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/the-council/open-data-and-transparency/privacy/records-management/>

8. Risk Management and the MARAC Panel

Effective risk management is central to this policy and underpins all housing responses to domestic abuse. Risk management is multi-faceted and includes:

- Recognising and responding to disclosures of domestic abuse
- Making timely and appropriate referrals to partner agencies
- Sharing and storing information securely and without delay
- Understanding safeguarding duties and thresholds
- Exploring and understanding housing options and their pathways
- Developing safety plans that are led by the survivor's choices and needs

Risk is dynamic and can change rapidly with no notice, so staff are expected to apply their professional judgement when supporting victims and survivors and respond accordingly. Training is in place to ensure staff can identify and respond to risk appropriately. In addition, staff have access to a series of procedures (see appendix 3) that highlight the actions they need to undertake to manage risks.

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Panel

MARAC is a key mechanism for managing high-risk domestic abuse cases. It brings together representatives from Housing Teams, Police, Health Services, Probation, Social Care Services, IDVAs, and other partners to share information and coordinate a multi-agency action plan. Staff will make referrals to MARAC when a victim/survivor is assessed as high risk. Although consent is preferred, consent is not required in such cases and the victim/survivor will be made aware of the referral, if it is safe to do so.

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse do not attend MARAC meetings but are represented by an IDVA or another agency. The purpose is to increase safety, ensure their views are considered, and develop a coordinated response. Staff must also consider the wider household, for example, where children are present. In such circumstances, children will be recognised as victims in their own right and will be included in assessments and safeguarding plans.

9. Perpetrator Management

The safety of victims and survivors is always our highest priority. Central to this is perpetrator management, which refers to the coordinated actions taken to hold perpetrators accountable, reduce risk to victims/survivors, and to prevent further harm. This includes enforcement measures, multi-agency collaboration, and monitoring improvement plans where failings have been identified.

Our approach to managing perpetrators is guided by DAHA standards and grounded in trauma-informed, risk-aware practice that prioritises safety, accountability, and survivor-centred responses.

We recognise that multiple perpetrators may be involved in some cases, which increases risk and complexity, requiring coordinated and informed responses across

all services. We actively engage in initiatives to strengthen perpetrator management, including collaboration with VAWG networks, The Drive Partnership¹³, and other specialist support organisations working in this field.

Power dynamics and counter-allegations

Perpetrators may sometimes present as victims/survivors or make counter-allegations to manipulate agencies and exert further control. Our approach aims to ensure that staff and partners are aware of these complex power dynamics and apply professional judgement when assessing disclosures and allegations. Support will not be withheld from victims/survivors due to malicious reporting by perpetrators. Clear communication and information sharing, as outlined in previous sections, are followed to help identify such instances.

Information gathering and confidentiality

Where safe and appropriate, staff will obtain up-to-date information about the perpetrator, including their name, contact details, known addresses, and history of abuse. This information supports risk assessments, safety planning and if criminal or legal action is taken against the perpetrator.

Cases reviewed at the MARAC are treated with utmost confidence. This includes ensuring that the perpetrator is not informed of the discussion.

Victim and survivor led contact with perpetrators

In exceptional circumstances, and only with the victim/survivor's informed consent and in coordination with an IDVA or specialist partner, a victim/survivor may request that staff speak to the perpetrator. In such instances, a risk assessment will be agreed upon with management and specialist services.

Staff will not act as mediators or ongoing facilitators between parties involved in domestic abuse because this may increase the risk of harm to both the victim/survivor and the staff member.

Support for perpetrators

Perpetrators can be signposted to appropriate support services at the earliest opportunity to help them recognise, address, and stop their abusive behaviour. This may include confidential helplines such as Respect who provide advice and support to perpetrators of domestic abuse (see [Appendix 2](#) for a full list of organisations).

Enforcement and legal action

Victims/survivors and partner agencies will be supported through the use of civil and criminal enforcement measures to hold perpetrators to account. Staff will seek

¹³ To learn more about The Drive Partnership, visit: <https://drivepartnership.org.uk/about-us/the-drive-partnership/>

guidance from legal services and specialist domestic abuse partners to determine the most appropriate legal response.

Domestic abuse is a breach of the Council's tenancy conditions. Where it is safe, proportionate, and legally appropriate to do so, the Council may seek possession of the property and evict the perpetrator. If possession is granted by the court, the perpetrator will be deemed intentionally homeless.

10. Domestic Abuse and Intersectionality

Understanding intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person's identity can intersect to create complex and compounded barriers to accessing support. The concept highlights how overlapping protected characteristics – such as ethnicity, race, gender identity, disability, mental health, class, and language – can lead to unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. Furthermore, where a person has faced discrimination or disadvantage, this can lead to a mistrust of professionals and even prevent victims/survivors from seeking support.

For example, a victim/survivor whose first language is not English and who has a disability may face more complex barriers to accessing support. This may be due to:

- Increased vulnerability associated with disability
- Previous experiences of racial discrimination or difficulty accessing services due to language barriers
- Risk of additional forms of abuse linked to cultural or social background

These factors can be exploited by perpetrators to exert greater control and may leave victims/survivors feeling powerless, isolated, and less likely to seek help. This could be because the victim/survivor does not know how to access support or fear they will not be taken seriously.

It is important to note that having intersectional characteristics does not automatically make someone more vulnerable¹⁴. Rather, staff must be aware of the potential implications of intersectionality and be equipped to recognise and respond to them appropriately.

Responding to intersectional needs

Staff are offered training and guidance to show professional curiosity and identify, understand, and sensitively address intersectional barriers. This includes making referrals to "By and For" specialist services that are designed to support individuals from specific communities, such as:

- [Galop](#) – supporting LGBTQ+ survivors

¹⁴ Please visit the Council Vulnerability Policy (2025) - https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/rj1fzx54/vulnerable_residents_policy.pdf

- [Hourglass](#) – supporting older victims/survivors of abuse
- [Southall Black Sisters](#) – supporting Black and minoritised women
- [Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre](#) – supporting Arabic-speaking women and their families

By recognising the unique challenges faced by victims/survivors with intersecting identities, staff can ensure that support is tailored, inclusive, and effective.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within our services. We aim to ensure all residents can access housing services safely, respectfully, and responsively, regardless of background, identity, or personal circumstances.

If a resident requires assistance in accessing or engaging with our services, staff will respond promptly and sensitively. This may include:

- Arranging translation or interpretation services, including British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for residents who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Providing printed materials in large font or alternative formats
- Ensuring that our facilities are physically accessible and safe for all residents
- Referrals to appropriate support services.

Staff are encouraged to proactively identify and address barriers to accessing support, and to make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. Our goal is to ensure that every resident is supported and included when seeking help.

11. Staff Development and Support

We recognise that delivering domestic abuse services requires specialist knowledge, emotional resilience, and a supportive working environment. We are committed to equipping staff with the training, supervision, and wellbeing resources they need to provide safe, trauma-informed, and survivor-centred support.

Training and learning

All housing staff are required to complete bespoke domestic abuse training designed by Refuge, which includes initial and refresher sessions and reflects the DAHA standards. The training has been informed by operational staff and survivors. Specialist training is also offered to teams in various roles to reflect their operational duties, and ad hoc training is delivered by the Department's Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

Staff also benefit from ongoing learning opportunities, including webinars, sector updates, and resources provided through partnerships with the VAWG team and DAHA. Procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with best practice.

The Department runs a Domestic Abuse Champion Scheme, with over 40 staff members offering peer support, promoting best practice, sharing insight and feeding

back on training needs. Champions play a vital role in embedding a culture of continuous learning and survivor-centred service delivery.

Supervision and case review

Operational staff receive regular one-to-one supervision to review domestic abuse cases, raise concerns, and reflect on practice in a safe and non-judgemental setting. Supervision ensures that cases are managed appropriately and in line with policy principles.

Audits and data reviews are conducted to monitor compliance, referral timeliness, and documentation quality. Where gaps are identified, staff receive enhanced supervision and training.

We actively participate in Ombudsman reviews, Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, and other formal investigations. We are committed to listening, learning, and improving.

Staff wellbeing

We are committed to supporting staff who may be affected by domestic abuse – whether through lived experience or current circumstances. All disclosures are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Providing domestic abuse services can be emotionally and psychologically challenging. Staff may experience vicarious trauma or distress due to repeated exposure to traumatic disclosures, or may be a survivor or victim of domestic abuse themselves. Managers are trained to respond sensitively and provide regular supervision.

Staff have access to the Council's flexible working scheme and the Employee Assistance Programme, which offers confidential support for physical and mental health, including counselling services.

The Domestic Abuse Champion Scheme also provides a confidential pathway for feedback, peer support, and signposting to services. Staff are encouraged to speak openly about any difficulties and explore appropriate adjustments with their managers.

Wellbeing is a shared responsibility. We are committed to fostering a compassionate and supportive working environment where staff feel safe, valued, and equipped to carry out their roles.

Appendix 1: Council teams and local services

Homelessness Prevention and Solution Team:

This is for anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Applications can be made online by visiting the website¹⁵. If the victim/survivor is at immediate risk of domestic abuse or violence and have nowhere safe to stay, they should not complete this form at home. Instead, contact us immediately on 020 8871 6840, or visit us in person at:

Housing Reception Centre
90 Putney Bridge Road
Wandsworth
SW18 1HR

The office is open for appointments between 9am and 4.30pm (Monday to Friday). On arrival, the victim/survivor will complete a form in the safety of our offices and will be given a same day appointment. Outside of these hours you should contact 020 8871 6000.

Duty to refer: third party professionals have a duty to refer to a local authority if a person is currently or at risk of homelessness. This can be completed online¹⁶ or by emailing: dutytorefer@wandsworth.gov.uk.

Victims/survivors will be allocated with a caseworker who will be their main point of contact.

Temporary Accommodation Team:

If the victim/survivor is in Council-allocated temporary accommodation and they are no longer safe, they are encouraged to call the temporary accommodation team via:

- Telephone 020 8871 6161
- Email temporaryaccommodation@wandsworth.gov.uk

Housing Management Team:

Wandsworth Council tenants can contact their Area Team Estate Manager. If contact details are unknown, reach out to the relevant Area Team:

- Central Area: 020 8871 5333
- Eastern Area: 020 8871 7439
- Southern Area: 020 8871 7288
- Western Area: 020 8871 5530

¹⁵ Wandsworth Council homelessness webpage:

<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-and-temporary-accommodation/preventing-homelessness/our-homelessness-duties/homelessness-application-process/>

¹⁶ To make a duty to refer online, visit: <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-and-temporary-accommodation/make-a-homelessness-referral/>

The **Central, Eastern and Southern Area Team** office is open between 9am and 4.30pm and they are based at:

Housing Reception Centre
90 Putney Bridge Road
Wandsworth
SW18 1HR

The **Western Area Team** office is open between 9am and 4.30pm, and is based at:

Western Area Housing Office
Roehampton Parish Hall
Alton Road
SW15 4LG

Tenancy Support Service:

The Tenancy Support Service offers support to Wandsworth Council residents who are at risk of losing their tenancy due to abuse-related rent arrears. They are available Monday to Friday between 9am to 5pm and can be contacted via:

- Telephone: 020 8871 6617
- Email: HousingTenancySupport@wandsworth.gov.uk

Refuge Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDVA) Service:

[Refuge](#) is the Council's Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDVA) service provider. They provide support and can offer refuge accommodation for victims/survivors and their children suffering from domestic abuse. They offer both emotional and practical support to ensure that every service user has an up to date risk assessment and support plan tailored to their individual needs.

- **Phone:** 0203 879 3544 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- **Email:** Richmondwandsworth@refuge.org.uk

Ascent Pan London Floating Support Service:

The service provides high-quality domestic abuse (DA) support, 'by-and-for' services and counselling for survivors at medium to low risk, living in safe accommodation outlined below:

- Survivor currently in a refuge but due to move on in the next month and needs re-settlement support
- Single sex temporary accommodation
- A property where a sanctuary scheme has been put in place
- A property which is survivor's resettlement or move on accommodation and is not known to the perpetrator

To make a referral, please call the central duty line on 0800 668 1419, or email on panlondonfss@refuge.org.uk

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop:

Free drop-in service providing legal advice, information, and support.

Appointments are not necessary. This service is available at:

St. Mark's

- **Opening times:** every Monday between 10am to 12 noon (excluding bank holidays)
- **Address:** St. Mark's, Battersea Rise, SW11 1EJ

Eastwood Children's Centre

- **Opening times:** every Wednesday between 10am to 12.30pm
- **Address:** 166 Roehampton Lane, Roehampton, London, SW15 4HR

The Sanctuary Scheme:

The [Stay Put Stay Safe scheme](#)¹⁷ aims to prevent homelessness by helping residents affected by domestic abuse and hate crime remain in their own homes and feel safe by offering a wide range of measures such as new locks, heavy-duty doors, additional window security and safe rooms. The scheme is available to both tenants and homeowners.

Email the Team on SPSS@wandsworth.gov.uk for more information.

Adult and Children Safeguarding Referrals:

Adult safeguarding referrals can be made online¹⁸. Reports can also be made via:

- Telephone: 020 8871 7707
- Email: accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk

Children safeguarding referrals can be made via the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), via:

- Telephone: 020 8871 6622
- Telephone outside of normal office hours (after 5pm weekdays or on weekends): 020 8871 6000
- Email: mash@wandsworth.gov.uk

Wandsworth L.I.N.K.S:

¹⁷ Please visit the Wandsworth Stay Put Stay Safe Sanctuary Scheme webpage for more information: <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-council-tenants>

¹⁸ Visit the webpage on: <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/adult-social-care-referral/>

[Wandsworth L.I.N.K.S](#) offer group support to mothers who are survivors of abuse. They also offer group sessions for those who have experienced substance misuse and can provide support to men who have abused and want to receive support to stop. Referrals to L.I.N.K.S must be made by a professional and is for Wandsworth residents only. For more information email WandsworthLINKS@wandsworth.gov.uk.

Appendix 2: Domestic Abuse Charities and Helplines

- National Domestic Abuse – support for all victims/survivors of domestic abuse
0808 2000 247 freephone 24/7 (access live chat Mon-Fri 3-10 pm)
[Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](https://nationaldahelpline.org.uk)
- Hestia Domestic Abuse Refuges – support for victims/survivors who require refuge
0808 169 9975, Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.
[Hestia's Domestic Abuse support services](#)
- Respect Men's advice line - advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse
0808 801 0327 freephone Monday - Friday 10am - 8pm
[Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK \(mensadviceline.org.uk\)](https://mensadviceline.org.uk)
- Al-Hasinya Moroccan Women's Centre – supporting Arabic-speaking women and their families who are experiencing or at risk of abuse
020 30 48 44 88 or email contact@al-hasaniya.org.uk
[Home | Al Hasaniya](#)
- Respect Phoneline - support for people who use abuse in their relationships
0808 802 4040 freephone
[Help For Domestic Violence Perpetrators | Respect Phoneline UK](#)
- Paladin – support for victims/survivors of stalking and harassment
020 3866 4107
[Paladin – National Stalking Advocacy Service \(paladinservice.co.uk\)](https://paladinservice.co.uk)
- Rape Crisis - specialist support for all victims/survivors of rape and sexual abuse
0808 802 9999 and online chat function - different opening hours each day
[Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
- Galop - National LGBTQ+ service for victims/survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, so-called conversion therapies, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse.
0800 999 5428, Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10am - 5pm, and Wednesday to Thursday 10am - 8pm
[Galop - the LGBTQ+ anti-abuse charity](#)
- Respond - support for those with learning disabilities or autism who have experienced abuse
0207 383 0700
[Supporting the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism / Respond](#)

- Hourglass - support for older people experiencing any form of abuse or neglect
0800 808 8141

[Hourglass \(wearehourglass.org\)](http://wearehourglass.org)

- Sign Health – support for deaf and hard of hearing domestic abuse victims/survivors

Text [07800 003421](tel:07800003421) or email da@signhealth.org.uk

[Domestic Abuse Information and Service Details - SignHealth](#)

- Karma Nirvana: Honour Network Helpline - support for victims/survivors of forced marriage and honour-based abuse

0800 599 9247 (Available 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday)

[Karma Nirvana](#)

Helping overcome barriers to accessing safe accommodation:

- Southall Black Sisters – support for migrant women with no recourse to public funds.

020 8571 0800 Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm

[SBS No Recourse Fund - Southall Black Sisters](#)

- National Dog Trust – provides free and confidential temporary care for **dogs**, enabling owners fleeing domestic abuse to access a refuge without the fear of what may happen to their **dog** if left behind.

0800 298 9199

[Overview - Freedom \(dogstrustfreedom.org.uk\)](http://dogstrustfreedom.org.uk)

- Cat Protection Lifeline - specialist cat fostering service for those fleeing **domestic abuse**

[0345 260 1280](tel:03452601280)

[Access Lifeline | Domestic violence & pets | Cats Protection](#)

Appendix 3: Internal staff procedures

Staff have access to a wide range of internal staff procedures and resources to support them in delivering domestic abuse services. The procedures/resources are:

- Domestic abuse procedure
- Management Transfer procedure
- Homeless Applications: Assessments, Inquiries and Personal Housing Plans procedure
- Homeless Prevention and Relief Casework procedure
- Signing new tenants procedure
- Mutual Exchange procedure
- Internal domestic abuse staff webpage¹⁹

¹⁹ This contains access to training material, referral processes/forms, minutes of domestic abuse meetings, leaflets from partner organisations and relevant policies

Appendix 4: Flowchart of processes

The below is a flowchart of processes, which outlines the housing teams and the typical steps that will be taken when supporting victims. There is no single 'correct' way or pathway when supporting victims/survivors, and 'when' and 'how' the steps are taken will differ dependent on their circumstances and whether it is an emergency.

 Zoom in: press 'Ctrl +' at the same time to enlarge text / page.



