

SUPPORTING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

A Unified Policy between



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1. Overview

The Borders Housing Network comprises of four registered social landlords; Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association and Waverley Housing Association (BHN). Each organisation has a responsibility to provide all employees with a safe and effective working environment. For some employees, the workplace can be a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety. We acknowledge that domestic abuse is a significant problem which has a devastating impact on those experiencing it and their families.

This policy has been created to ensure all employees – whether survivor or perpetrator of domestic abuse – are aware of the support available within the organisation. It also:

- Provides guidance to line managers and Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contacts on supporting employees affected by domestic abuse.
- Underlines the responsibility our people have to recognise and report domestic abuse in our customers.

This policy is underpinned by a commitment to the principles of safeguarding children, a duty of care to our employees, equality and diversity and the protection of vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this policy, Borders Housing Network Registered Social Landlords will be referred to as 'BHN'.

All BHN employees, consultants, temporary and agency workers, volunteers, students, apprentices and anyone engaged on a contract for services working for or on behalf of BHN will be referred to as 'our people'.

We will use the term 'abuser' to describe the perpetrator of the abuse and 'survivor' to describe the person experiencing the abuse.

2. Our Aims

Our aim is to ensure that any of our people who experience domestic abuse are supported by:

- Ensuring that they are aware of this policy and where to find further guidance
- Listening to, believing and acting upon concerns
- Providing effective management through supervision, practical support and training
- Providing awareness raising and training during induction and engagement of our people
- Providing employees with the appropriate level of domestic abuse awareness training according to their role
- Taking a clear anti-abuse stance against perpetrators

3. Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 and the legislation came into force on 1st April 2019. It is a course of conduct offence, where ongoing harmful and abusive actions in a relationship, which in isolation might not seem as serious, are examined together – this is about behaviour over time.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. Domestic abuse is

overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men. It doesn't matter how old someone is, what race or ethnicity they are, what class they are, whether or not they are disabled, or whether they have children – anyone can be a victim of abuse.

Often when people think of domestic abuse they think of physical violence, but domestic abuse is very often so much more than that. For many women who live with domestic abuse there will be no scars, bruises or broken bones, but for some it can take their life. No one kind of abuse is more serious than any other.

It reflects the lived experiences of women, children and young people by bridging the gap in addressing controlling behaviours not covered by existing offences and crimes.

This legislation is also the first to put children, now identified as potential victims, on the face of the law in the form of an aggravation that will allow the judiciary to impose harsher sentences when children are involved.

4. Types of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse isn't just physical. It can happen in many ways. The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 began on 1 April 2019. Abuse now includes violent, physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse.

The offence can carry maximum of 14 years.

Domestic abuse can include:

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

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/domestic-abuse/what-is-domestic-abuse/#Act>

5. Domestic abuse inequalities

Anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of their race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. However there are certain groups of people who are more likely to experience domestic abuse or experience it more severely which include:

- Women living in poverty
- LGBT+ people
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women
- Refugee women
- Older people

- Pregnant women
- Disabled women

6. Domestic abuse and the workplace

- 75% of survivors are abused at work as well as in the home (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016)
- 54% of employers said that domestic abuse caused the quality of an employees work to slip (The Prince's Responsible Business Network, 2018)
- 56% of employers said that domestic abuse led to absenteeism (The Prince's Responsible Business Network, 2018)
- 75% of survivors are abused at work as well as in the home (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016)
- Domestic abuse costs businesses £1.9 billion per year (The Prince's Responsible Business Network, 2018)
- Only 5% of employers have a stand-alone employee domestic abuse policy (The Prince's Responsible Business Network, 2018)
- On average employers lose £7,245 in lost output per survivor (Home Office, 2019)

Some effects on the employer may include:

- Negative impact on productivity, performance and morale
- Employee turnover, as employees may have to leave work or move away to escape abuse.

7. Signs of domestic abuse in the workplace

Incidents may occur in the workplace or specifically affect the work of an employee, indicating they may be experiencing domestic abuse, including:

- Changes in behaviour including uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration
- Changes in the quality of work for no reason
- Arriving late or leaving early
- Low attendance or high presenteeism without an explanation
- Needing regular time off for appointments
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing – covering up
- Taking regular personal calls when at work

Domestic abuse also affects people close to the survivor – this can include work colleagues who may cover for the survivor or be targeted by the perpetrator to gain information. Signs of this include:

- A colleague making excuses for another employee during absence from work
- The perpetrator following a work colleague of the survivor to or from work
- A colleague being subject to questioning by the perpetrator about the survivor's contact details or location
- A colleague trying to deal with the abuse and fear for their own safety
- A colleague being aware of the abuse and not knowing how to help

8. Practical support for employees

We will respect an employee's right to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage ensuring that they are given time to decide what to do.

If an employee would like support, there are a broad range of practical options that managers can consider including:

- Special leave outside of an employee's annual leave entitlement
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns using existing procedures e.g. flexible working policy.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with the perpetrator in a customer facing role.
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example blocking emails / screening telephone calls; alerting reception / security if the perpetrator is known to come to the workplace; and ensuring arrangements are in place for safely travelling to and from work.
- Redeployment or relocation with the employee's consent including: advising colleagues on a need- to-know basis and agreeing a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace.
- Access to courses developed to support survivors of domestic abuse, see Appendix 2.

9. Accessing support for employees

If an employee discloses domestic abuse, we will always listen to them, support them and believe them.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse or are concerned about an employee and would like to seek confidential and non-judgemental advice / support, you can:

- Speak to one of our Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contacts (see Appendix 3 for contact details)
- Speak to your manager
- Email HR – Waverley Housing - HR Officer joyce.wright@waverley-housing.co.uk
- Insert Scottish national helpline
- Use the 24/7 National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247 / <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk> for free, confidential advice
- Use SafeCall - 0800 915 1571 / www.safecall.co.uk/report for anonymous reporting
- Contact Senior Borders Housing Network (DAWS) Michelle Meldrum - michelle.meldrum@berwickshirehousing.org.uk

10. What to do if you suspect an employee is experiencing domestic abuse

If you suspect an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, you should facilitate a conversation in a safe space to discuss appropriate support, if you feel comfortable. Alternatively, you can seek guidance from a Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contact or contact the HR team.

Shying away from the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. Often employees will not feel confident in speaking up and making the first move to begin a

conversation is key. You should invite the employee into a private room where they feel safe and ask them indirect questions to help establish a relationship and develop empathy.

Some indirect questions you could ask include:

- I just want to check in with you – how are you doing at the moment?
- How are things going at home?
- What about stress levels? At work? At home?
- Are you having any problems with your partner?
- Do you feel safe at home?

You should never:

- Ask for proof of abuse
- Ask them why they don't just leave
- Contact the abuser
- Force the member of employee to accept support

Maintaining a non-judgemental and empathetic attitude is crucial to supporting an employee you are worried about. Remember that your role is not to deal with the abuse itself, but to make it clear that employees will be supported and outline what help is available.

You should:

- Reassure the employee that you are always there if they need to chat about anything and remind them about other places in the organisation they can go for support and give them contact details (HR, DAWS Contacts, SafeCall).
- Avoid victim blaming language. Survivors of domestic abuse often feel to blame for the abuse – you should be clear in your language choices that the abuse is not the survivor's fault and that it is the perpetrator who is responsible.
- Take your time to build a relationship with an employee and continue to check in with them. Often survivors of domestic abuse will not feel able to disclose abuse if they don't feel comfortable around you.
- If they seem resistant to you then ask them if there is someone else they would like to speak to – it may be that they are more comfortable speaking to someone who they more closely identify with, i.e. someone who has the same gender, race or sexuality; or who practices the same religion as them.
- Respect boundaries and privacy. Even if you disagree with the decisions being made regarding an employee's relationship, it is important to understand that a survivor of domestic abuse may make a number of attempts to leave their partner before they are finally able to do so.

If you would like support with speaking to an employee you are worried about, you can use the **Everyone's Business Employer's Helpline** which is a resource for employers to advise them on how to approach domestic abuse disclosures by their employees, and to triage such employees into the appropriate local specialist domestic abuse services.

Employers who are seeking advice can call **07770480437** or email **Adviceline.EB@hestia.org** between 10am-3pm Monday to Friday for support. Appendix 2 provides other useful contacts and information.

11. Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contacts

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may not wish to disclose to their manager or HR.

As this Policy is a unified approach across all Borders Housing Network Registered Social Landlords, we have ensured our Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) contacts are trained to respond to domestic abuse and are located across all organisations to ensure employees can easily access them and be signposted to specialist support. It is important to note you will not be obliged to speak to the DAWS contact within your organisation and if it feels more comfortable to do so, you can contact another DAWS from one of the other organisations within BHN.

The list of our Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contacts and their details can be found in Appendix 3.

Domestic Abuse Workplace Support (DAWS) Contact responsibilities:

- Be a non-judgmental and empathetic point of contact for employees experiencing domestic abuse and signpost specialist services to them.
- Assist with any referrals relating to domestic abuse and liaise with clients to ensure full information is shared.
- Attend domestic abuse training.
- Be a point of contact for their organisation for information relating to domestic abuse.
- Raise awareness and enhance the overall knowledge of domestic abuse within the organisation.
- Ensure up to date and accessible information is available in relation to support services for survivors.
- Ensure leaflets and posters are displayed and available within the organisation.

12. Confidentiality and right to privacy

Confidentiality cannot always be assured for employees who disclose that they are a perpetrator of domestic abuse. In instances whereby a person or children may be at risk of serious harm. Reports will be made in line with our Safeguarding Policy and, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

Employees who disclose that they are a survivor of domestic abuse should assume that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other employees without their permission. The HR team must also be informed in order to provide the right level of support.

However, there are certain circumstances where confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when there are concerns regarding children, vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of their employees. In these circumstances, the employee will be informed as to the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained.

13. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by an employee will not be tolerated and may not be treated as a purely private matter. Employees should be aware that we see domestic abuse as a serious matter which can lead to criminal convictions. Conduct outside of work may lead to disciplinary action being taken against an employee.

However, BHN see that we have a role in encouraging and supporting those perpetrators of abuse who wish to address their abusive behaviour. Any employee who identifies themselves as a perpetrator will be provided with information about the services and provided with access to support available to them.

We will ensure that allegations are dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the employee who is the subject of the allegations or disclosure, providing them with guidance and support. Any investigations will be sufficiently independent.

The employee who is the subject of the allegations will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly
- Helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- Kept informed of progress

14. Survivors and perpetrators employed by BHN

In addition to considering disciplinary action against perpetrators, action may need to be taken to ensure that the survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace if they both happen to work at any one of the BHN organisations – see the section above titled ‘practical support that we can offer’. Support will be provided to the survivor throughout the process.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the survivor. This may include a change of duties or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programs. Further advice can be sought from the HR Team.

15. Related policies/Guidance

Policies relating to supporting and responding to domestic abuse in the workplace include the following:

- Equality and Diversity
- Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing
- Adult and Child Protection
- Safeguarding

Guidance relating to supporting and responding to domestic abuse in the workplace may include the following:

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/managing-supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse-guide_tcm18-84538.pdf

The Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse website has information relating to supporting staff around domestic abuse - <https://www.eida.org.uk/role-employer>

Hesta: Everyone's Business provides support and advice to employers on domestic abuse:
<https://www.hestia.org/the-everyones-business-offer>

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance offer guidance and resources to support responding to domestic abuse in the workplace - <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/accreditation-for-housing-providers/guidance-resources/>

In addition, Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Make A Stand' campaign has been signed by all 4 Registered Social Landlords within the Scottish Borders and the Guidance and Publications detail more about how your organisation can support and respond to domestic abuse in the workplace.

<https://www.cih.org/publications/how-to-make-a-stand>

Appendix 1: Ten steps to address the effects of domestic abuse

Recognise the problem

1. Look for sudden changes in behaviour – for example turning camera off during video call.
2. Look for changes in the employee's appearance, for example wearing a scarf inside, excessive clothing on hot days, or changes in the amount of make-up worn.

Respond

3. Do not ask for proof if somebody discloses experiencing domestic abuse.
4. Reassure the employee that BHN (individual organisation) understands how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.

Provide support

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their abuser telephones or visits the workplace.
7. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that they have arrangements for getting safely to and from work.
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.
9. Provide access to supportive literature i.e. leaflets and posters. Ensure these are placed in discrete locations e.g. putting up posters on the backs of toilet doors.

Refer to the appropriate help

10. Have a list of the services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer the employee to appropriate organisations that can provide them with domestic abuse support.

Appendix 2: Support Available for Victims

National – female and children

- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline - 0800 027 1234 (24 hour service).
- Victim Support Scotland – (0800 160 1985 Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm) Provides information and support for victims and witnesses of crime.
- Scottish Women's Aid – (0131 226 6606) Provides advice, support and safe accommodation for women (and their children) who have been abused by their partner or ex-partner.
- Rape Crisis Scotland – (08088 01 03 02 6pm to midnight, 7 days a week).
- Cedar Network (for Children/young people and mothers).
- Shakti Women's Aid - 0131 475 2399 Help for black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people.
- **National Stalking Helpline** Advice and support for anyone experiencing stalking 0808 802 0300 (Mon-Fri 9:30am-4pm except Weds 1pm-4pm).
- Contact form: <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/forms/national-stalking-helpline-enquiry-form> www.suzylamplugh.org/

A list of organisations to contact if you or someone you know is being affected by domestic abuse.

- [Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](http://www.suzylamplugh.org/) telephone: 0800 027 1234 (24/7 helpline)
- [Scottish Women's Aid](http://www.scottishwomenaid.org/)
- [SafeLives](http://www.safe.org.uk/)
- [Rape Crisis Scotland](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/) telephone 08088 010302
- [Abused Men In Scotland \(AMIS\)](http://www.abusedmeninScotland.org/) telephone 03300 949 395
- [Men's Advice Line](http://www.menadvice.org.uk/) telephone: 0808 801 0327
- [LGBT Domestic Abuse Scotland](http://www.lgbtdomesticabuse.org/)
- [Samaritans](http://www.samaritans.org/) telephone: 116 123
- [Supportline](http://www.supportline.org.uk/) telephone: 01708 765200
- [Scottish Women's Rights Centre](http://www.scottishwomenrightscentre.org/) telephone: 08088 010 789
- [Victim Support Scotland](http://www.victim-support.org.uk/) telephone: 0800 160 1985
- [ASSIST \(Advocacy, Support, Safety, Information Services Together\)](http://www.assist.org.uk/) telephone: 0141 276 7710
- [Hestia - Bright Sky Application](http://www.hestia.org.uk/)
- [Hollie Guard](http://www.hollieguard.org/)

National – LGBT

- National LGBT Domestic Abuse helpline - 0300 999 5428 or 0800 999 5428 support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

National – Support Available for Male

- AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland) – 0808 800 0024
- Also supported by - Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline

- Victim Support Scotland, Rape Crisis Scotland and National LGBT Domestic Abuse helpline.
- **Men's Advice Line** Advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse 0808 801 0327 (Mon–Fri 9am-8pm) info@mensadviceline.org.uk (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm; Sat and Sun 10am-12pm; and 4pm-6pm) www.mensadviceline.org.uk/

Scottish Borders Support for Domestic Abuse - All

| Service | Telephone number | Email address |
|---|---|--|
| DAAS (both male and female) | 01835 825024 | daas@scotborders.gov.uk |
| CEDAR | 01835 824000 ext. 6876 | CEDAR@scotborders.gov.uk |
| Children 1st Borders – Domestic Abuse service | 01750 222892 | ettrick@children1st.org.uk |
| Border Women's Aid | 01450 218409 | admin@borderwomensaid.co.uk |
| Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre | 0800 054 2445 or 01896 661070 (office) | support@sbrcc.org.uk |
| MARAC Coordinator | 01835 825024 | marac@scotborders.gcsx.gov.uk |
| VAW and domestic abuse co-ordinator – Andrea Beavon | 01835 824000 ext. 8242 | Andrea.beavon@scotborders.gcsx.gov.uk |

Appendix 3: List of Domestic Abuse Workplace Supports (DAWS) List

December 2022

| Name | Organisation | Job Title | Email | Telephone Number |
|-----------------------|--------------|--|--|------------------|
| Carolyn Veitch | BHA | Neighbourhood Manager | Carolyn.veitch@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 01361 885947 |
| Kerry Whitson | BHA | BeFriend Project Worker | Kerry.Whitson@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 07792 508975 |
| David Scott | BHA | Asset Manager | David.scott@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 07547 409687 |
| Caroline Renton | BHA | Customer Experience Advisor | Caroline.renton@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 0800 652 8104 |
| Avril Bain | BHA | Customer Experience Advisor | Avril.bain@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 0800 652 8104 |
| Kendra Douglas | Waverley | Tenant Support Worker | KendraDouglas@waverley-housing.co.uk | 01450 364206 |
| Debby Gillet | SBHA | Policy Advisor | DGillet@sbha.org.uk | 07917 013457 |
| Doug Cox | SBHA | Tradesman | DCox@sbha.org.uk | 07919 302746 |
| Debora Taggart | Eildon | H R Manager | DeborahT@eildon.org.uk | 07918 693803 |
| Hilary Scott | Eildon | Housing Services Manager | hilary@eildon.org.uk | 07810 123205 |
| Other contacts | | | | |
| Michelle Meldrum | BHA | Chief Executive | Michelle.meldrum@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 07736 028745 |
| Dan Blake | BHA | Executive Director – Customer Experience | Dan.blake@berwickshirehousing.org.uk | 07870 607569 |
| Nicola McIlwraith | SBHA | Head of Support Services | NMcllwraith@sbha.org.uk | 07789 924337 |
| Lenore Suddon | Waverley | Housing Services Manager | Lenore.suddon@waverley-housing.co.uk | 01450 364233 |