Domestic Abuse Policy

1 Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to domestic abuse and the measures in place to reduce the risks presented by domestic abuse to our customers and their children. We recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, at any time. As a major housing and support provider, we have a significant role in recognising domestic abuse in our communities, and in supporting customers to access the right help to restore choice, control, and safety in their lives.

2 Scope

This policy sets out how we will:

- Work with and support customers who are living with or are survivors of domestic abuse
- Work with customers who are perpetrators of domestic abuse

The policy and accompanying procedures apply to:

- Customers who live in accommodation owned or managed by us
- Customers we deliver community-based services to or that we may encounter in our work

2.1 Our Commitment

MTVH will create an open and supportive environment where we will:

- Listen to and acknowledge survivors of domestic abuse without judgement
- Support our customers to live safely in their homes, or if they have to relocate, to suffer no unnecessary detriment to their security of tenure
- Play our part in safeguarding children and young people exposed to domestic abuse
- Encourage a culture of prevention and early intervention of domestic abuse
- Play our part in signposting perpetrators to specialist support agencies
- Recognise the diversity of our customers and acknowledge that some may face an increased risk of domestic abuse, experience abuse in different ways, or face additional barriers to accessing support.
- Provide specialist training so that all colleagues have the relevant skills and knowledge to work effectively with domestic abuse, tailored to their role
- Create a culture that challenges the stigma and barriers often associated with domestic abuse

2.2 Definitions

Definition	Description
Domestic Abuse	Domestic abuse is any abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected**.** Abuse can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour and includes: • Physical abuse • Sexual abuse • Controlling or coercive behaviour • Economic abuse • Psychological or emotional abuse

Personally Connected	***People are personally connected if they are, or have been:*** • Married or civil partners • Engaged or in a civil partnership agreement • In an intimate personal relationship • Parents of the same child or share parental responsibility • Relatives • Immediate biological family • Stepfamily and extended family of an individual including such family members of individuals present or former spouse, civil partner or cohabiting partner. *A person no longer needs to be co-habiting with their abuser to be defined as 'personally connected)*
Children as Victims of Domestic Abuse	Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are now legally recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. A child is considered a victim if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are personally connected to either the perpetrator or the survivor.
Honour-Based Abuse and Faith - Based Abuse:	Abuse which is perpetrated to protect the family's honour. For example, rape, murder, physical or emotional violence but also includes: • Forced Marriage (marriage without full and free consent of both parties) • Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (as defined in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003)

2.3 Child to Parent Domestic Abuse

Child to parent domestic abuse involves a child abusing a parent or other adult within the household. Where the child is between the ages of 16-18, this would be classified as domestic abuse.

Where the child perpetrator is under 16, whilst this is not classified as Domestic Abuse under current legislation, where made aware of this, MTVH would work with the family and involved statutory services to support the family, with reference to our Safeguarding Children Policy, and where applicable, our Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy.

2.4 Gendered Patterns of Domestic Abuse

Whilst domestic abuse can affect people of all genders, women and girls are disproportionately affected, particularly in relation to frequency, repeated victimisation, severity, serious injury and domestic homicide. Pregnancy and the period after birth may increase risk, including through physical, emotional, economic, reproductive or coercive control.

Domestic abuse may also affect men and boys, trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people, people in same sex relationship and people with intersecting identities.

2.5 Barriers faced by communities and people with intersecting needs:

Domestic abuse may be experienced differently depending on a person's identity, circumstances, support needs or community context. Some survivors may face additional barriers, increased risk or targeted forms of abuse, including:

- Women and girls

- Men and boys
- Disabled people, people with care and support needs and neurodivergent people
- Older people
- Young people aged 16 and 17
- LGBTQ+ people, trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people
- Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities (including Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities and faith communities), people with insecure immigration status or no recourse to public funds
- People experiencing homelessness, mental ill-health or affected by substance use
- Carers

Barriers to support may include fear of not being believed, stigma, shame, discrimination, racism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, language or communication barriers, digital exclusion, financial dependence, insecure immigration status, fear of deportation, previous negative experiences with services, distrust of police or statutory agencies, concerns about confidentiality, religious or community pressure, family expectations, or fear that seeking help may increase risk.

Targeted forms of abuse may include immigration-related abuse, disability-related abuse, carer abuse, reproductive coercion, technological abuse, abuse linked to faith or belief, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, FGM, isolation from community networks, or threats to disclose personal information such as sexuality, gender identity, HIV status, immigration status or health information.

3 Our Approach

In our approach, we seek to be:

- **Empowering:** We recognise that those who are experiencing domestic abuse are best placed to assess their risk and what support they need. We will be led by survivors in this.
- **Confidential**: We will treat any disclosure of domestic abuse in the strictest confidence and will only break confidentiality in exceptional circumstances (see relevant section on confidentiality and safeguarding).
- **Non-judgemental and trauma-informed:** ensures that victims/survivors are treated with compassion, dignity, and respect, recognising the profound and varied impact domestic abuse can have on their emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing.
- **Accountability-focused and safety-led:** We will respond to people using abusive behaviour in a way that prioritises the safety of survivors, children, colleagues and others at risk, avoids collusion, minimisation or victim-blaming, and supports appropriate action to stop the abuse, including referral to specialist perpetrator services where safe and appropriate

3.1 Working with survivors

When working with survivors, MTVH adopt a ‘believing approach’. This means:

- **Zero Judgment:** Staff treat every disclosure with respect, care, and complete confidentiality.
- **No Proof Required for Help:** Support and advice are given immediately without demanding evidence or a prior police report.
- **Survivor-Led Support:** Actions and decisions respect the victim's choices, safety needs, and personal control.

We publicise our approach to tackling and raising awareness about domestic abuse and its effects through a range of communication methods and platforms, considering accessibility and ease as we do so.

3.2 Working with an alleged perpetrator who is an MTVH resident

Whilst we will always try to support anyone who identifies themselves to us as a survivor of domestic abuse, we will also endeavour to support residents who are alleged to have perpetrated domestic abuse.

Where safe and appropriate, MTVH will support the resident to engage with specialist behaviour-change services. However, support will not replace enforcement action where this is necessary to protect survivors, children, or the wider community.

MTVH has a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. We will seek to hold alleged perpetrators accountable for their behaviour, while also taking into account any vulnerabilities they may have. Vulnerabilities may help us understand risk and identify appropriate support needs, but they will not excuse abusive behaviour.

Where there is evidence that a tenant has engaged in domestic abuse, MTVH may consider tenancy enforcement action, including injunctions and possession proceedings where appropriate. We do not require a criminal conviction before considering such action. Decisions will be based on the available evidence, assessed risk, safeguarding considerations, and the circumstances of each case.

Any action taken will be lawful, proportionate, and focused on protecting survivors, children and others from harm. We will consider both the rights of those affected by the abuse and the rights of the tenant subject to enforcement action.

3.3 Prevention and Early Intervention Approach

MTVH aims to reduce the risk of domestic abuse occurring and create a culture where all colleagues have the skills to recognise and identify signs of domestic abuse. To support this, we will:

- Support all colleagues, in line with their roles and responsibilities, to be pro-active in looking for indicators of domestic abuse, i.e., exercising professional curiosity, so that it is identified at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Seek to complete a comprehensive risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Checklist (DASH-RIC), every time we identify the potential for domestic abuse
- Provide comprehensive training in domestic abuse to all relevant colleagues to include signs/indicators of domestic abuse

MTVH will collate and analyse data in order to:

- Increase our understanding of who is experiencing domestic abuse
- Tailor our services according to the needs of our customers
- Identify issues and trends and make improvements where needed

3.4 Supporting Survivors to Remain Safe in Their Home

Our priority is to help survivors of domestic abuse remain safe and secure in their homes wherever possible. We recognise that being forced to leave home can be disruptive and distressing, and can have a significant impact on survivors, children, families, support networks, education and employment.

Wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so, we will support survivors to remain in their home. This may include working with specialist domestic abuse services, partner agencies and the police, carrying out safety planning, considering additional security measures, and exploring legal remedies to help increase safety and reduce the risk of further harm.

We recognise that every person's circumstances are different. While remaining in the home may be the preferred option for some survivors, others may feel that moving is the safest or most appropriate

course of action. We will take a survivor-led approach and work with the survivor to understand their individual needs, preferences and circumstances.

Where a survivor wishes to move, we will provide advice and support to help them understand the housing options available to them. This may include considering a management transfer where appropriate and in line with our **Allocations Policy**, supporting applications for rehousing, and signposting or referring survivors to local authority housing teams and other relevant support services.

We do not hold emergency accommodation and cannot guarantee an immediate move to alternative accommodation. Where emergency accommodation is required, responsibility for assessing housing need and providing temporary accommodation rests with the relevant local authority. We will work with local authorities and partner agencies to support survivors in accessing suitable accommodation wherever possible.

We will seek to ensure that survivors do not experience unnecessary detriment to their housing security as a result of domestic abuse. Where tenancy issues arise, including requests to end a joint tenancy, we will signpost survivors to appropriate independent legal services for advice and representation.

3.5 Working Together in Partnership

To support survivors, we are committed to working in partnership with Specialist Domestic Abuse Services, the Police, Social Care and Health.

We attend MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings where cases are heard which involve our customers.

We work closely with Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adult Boards (LSCB and SAB) or their equivalent. We participate in Strategic Partnership Boards in line with information sharing protocols and attend Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews when required.

We co-operate and share information appropriately with local authorities and our partners with statutory responsibilities where there are concerns that relate to our customers.

Where a case is investigated by other organisations, in line with best practice and information sharing principles, we will seek updates as part of our case management as a housing provider and ensure that any housing related actions are completed.

3.6 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

We are committed to handling all domestic abuse disclosures with strict confidentiality. Personal information is collected, stored, and shared in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and any relevant data-sharing agreements. Information will only be shared where it is lawful, necessary, proportionate, and in the interests of the survivor's safety.

We ensure that personal data is kept secure and shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

Information may be shared without consent where this is permitted by law, including when:

- There is a risk of serious harm to the survivor or others
- Children or vulnerable adults may be at risk and safeguarding duties apply
- Information sharing is necessary for lawful multi-agency risk management, such as MARAC arrangements or action with enforcement partners, and is supported by appropriate data-sharing agreements

3.7 Third Party Organisations

We have several third-party contract arrangements with landlords, support providers, contractors and suppliers. Where appropriate, our contract specifications require our partners to comply with this policy and accompanying procedures and for this to be reflected in their own policies and procedures.

3.8 Monitoring, Review, and Continuous Improvement

We are committed to ensuring our response to domestic abuse remains effective, survivor-centred, and aligned with statutory duties and sector best practice.

We routinely monitor how domestic abuse cases are managed, including response times, risk assessments, safety planning, and multi-agency collaboration. We use data and learning from case audits, internal evaluations, safeguarding reviews, and local or national Domestic Homicide Reviews to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities to improve practice and outcomes for survivors.

We will seek feedback from survivors and partner agencies and use this, alongside monitoring insights and external learning, to evaluate the quality and impact of our approach. This learning will be used to strengthen our procedures, staff training, and partnership working.

3.9 Training for our colleagues:

We are committed to ensuring that colleagues have the knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise the signs and indicators of domestic abuse and respond appropriately when concerns are identified or disclosed.

All frontline colleagues receive training appropriate to their role, with additional specialist training provided where required. Training is designed to help colleagues understand the dynamics and impact of domestic abuse, identify risk factors and warning signs, recognise barriers to disclosure, and understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, confidentiality and information sharing.

We promote a culture of professional curiosity and encourage colleagues to look beyond presenting issues, remain alert to potential indicators of domestic abuse, and sensitively explore concerns where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Colleagues are supported to take a person-centred and trauma-informed approach, recognising the impact that abuse can have on individuals, families and communities.

Training content and delivery is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up to date, effective and relevant to the needs of colleagues. We will take account of changes in legislation, guidance, emerging risks, learning from cases and feedback from colleagues and customers. Frontline colleagues are required to complete refresher training at appropriate intervals, to maintain their knowledge, skills and confidence in recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

This helps ensure that colleagues are equipped to deliver this policy effectively and to provide safe, informed and appropriate support to survivors in accordance with our responsibilities as a housing provider.

4 Background legislation

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Domestic Abuse statutory guidance
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Crime and Policing Act 2026
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Family Law Act 1996

- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 1996
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Renters' Rights Act 2025
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Victims and Prisoners Act 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK General Data Protection Regulation

5 Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In implementing this policy, MTVH is committed to treating all colleagues, customers, suppliers, and stakeholders fairly and with respect. Further information on our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including how to raise a grievance or concern, is available in the MTVH Diversity & Inclusion Policy.

An Equality Impact Assessment for this policy has been completed and will be retained by the Policy Team.

6 STAIRs statement

MTVH publishes the information covered in this policy under the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) publication scheme.

All information published under STAIRs can be accessed on our website www.mtvh.co.uk. However, some information may be protected under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and will be redacted or withheld to prevent harm.

7 Key Policy Information

Policy Owner	Director of Housing
Author	Head of Customer Risk and Vulnerability
Approved by	Customer Services SLT
Effective from	October 2026
Approach to review	This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed as required by the owner for changes in legislation, regulation, and operational need. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to customers and colleagues. Next expected review is 5 years from the 'Effective date' of this document.
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