



Domestic Abuse Policy

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KINGDOM HOUSING GROUP DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

1. Statement of Intent

This policy sets out the Kingdom Group's approach to dealing with domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home. We understand that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse and this policy aims to provide a proactive housing response to preventing and addressing all forms of violence in the home; ensuring that victims/survivors are fully supported to make informed choices in regard to their housing needs and options.

This policy is intended to reduce the impact of homelessness for anyone who finds themselves homeless as a result of domestic abuse or other forms of violence within the home.

2. General Principles

The Kingdom Group supports a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home, promoting early intervention to ensure the safety of tenants who may be suffering or fleeing from these. The Kingdom Group will treat reports of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home as emergencies and will aim to respond within 48 hours.

The Kingdom Group will provide a confidential, sensitive, and responsive service to victims/survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Some issues cannot be dealt with effectively whilst absolutely maintaining confidentiality. Where this is the case, it will be explained to the individual(s) concerned and they will be consulted on how to proceed. Exceptions to this will be where there is a child at risk, a high risk of serious harm to any person, or where we are required by law to provide information to other agencies.

The Kingdom Group will adopt a proactive approach when preventing and addressing domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home. We will work closely with relevant local authorities and other housing association partners to provide a collaborative and co-ordinated response to the housing and support needs of those experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home. The Kingdom Group will develop effective working relationships with agencies across all of our operational areas such as Police Scotland, Fife Women's Aid, Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP), Fife Safer Communities Team, Fife Public Protection Team, CARF (Citizens Advice and Rights Fife), SS&S@H (Safe Secure & Supported @ Home) and Victim Support Scotland.

The policy aligns with the Kingdom Group's corporate values by providing clear information for customers about some of the services that they may expect to access. We will provide leaflets, in plain English, explaining our policy and procedures in relation to particular requests. These will also be available online. On request and where appropriate we will take practical steps to help tenants.

This could include arranging interpretation and translation services and providing information on CD/tape, in larger print and in other languages.

In line with our commitment to diversity and inclusion, this policy can be made available in a variety of formats, including large print, and can be translated into another language or media. Reasonable adjustments will also be made to assist individuals who have a disability. This may be achieved by sign-posting victims/survivors of domestic abuse to Fife Council's Easy Read Domestic Abuse resource, which was produced in partnership with FVAWP and Fife Adult Support & Protection Committee.

We will provide a high level of service regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, geographical location and carer status. This policy has been developed with input from Fife Centre for Equalities, Brodies Solicitors, partner agencies, Fife Women's Aid and in consultation with customers.

3. Definitions of Domestic Abuse and Other Forms of Violence in the Home

Definition of Domestic Abuse

We recognise that domestic abuse can happen between those aged 16 or over who are or have been partners, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

The Kingdom Group will use the Scottish Government's definition of domestic abuse:

"Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse), can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends)".

The types of abuse can include, but are not limited to:

- Intimidation, degradation, isolation and control
- Psychological
- Sexual or physical violence
- Financial
- Emotional
- Online or digital abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Controlling or coercive behaviours

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant by:

- Isolating them from sources of support
- Exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain
- Deriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and
- Regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of:

- Acts of assault
- Threats
- Humiliation and intimidation
- Other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

Other Forms of Violence in the Home

As part of the Kingdom Group's zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse, this policy will also cover those experiencing other forms of violence in the home. This includes, but is not limited to, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). While these terms are used to describe a range of behaviours that disproportionately impact women and children, the Kingdom Group recognises that they can affect any person regardless of age, gender or ethnic group.

VAWG and GBV, as defined by the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland, cover a spectrum of violent and abusive behaviours including but not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence in the family, general community or institutions. This includes domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in public.
- Commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography and trafficking.

It also includes so called "honour based" violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), stalking, and forced marriage.

This is in line with Fife Housing Register's protocol for dealing with Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

4. Our Approach to Domestic Abuse and Other Forms of Violence in the Home

Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse and Other Forms of Violence in the Home

The Kingdom Group recognises that a partnership approach is the most effective way to support victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home. To ensure appropriate support is in place whilst housing issues are resolved, our staff will encourage individuals to allow us to share information with other agencies.

It is important to ensure complaints which may relate to domestic abuse or other forms of violence within the home are not treated under the Kingdom Group's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Complaints that are investigated in this way risk blaming victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home, inadvertently supporting perpetrators of the abuse. This could discourage victims/survivors of domestic abuse from seeking support.

We will support staff to identify signs of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home by providing staff with training and access to resources. This will involve working in partnership with the Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP) who "provides a range of both single and multi-agency training opportunities around violence against women for practitioners."

Research indicates that where men are involved in domestic abuse, it is as perpetrators rather than as victims.

When men present as victims/survivors of domestic abuse, frontline staff should be aware that there are resources to provide support including: <http://respect.uk.net/>

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner. It provides information and support for heterosexual, gay and bisexual male victims of domestic abuse: www.mensadvice.org.uk/.

If staff believe that they have noticed signs of abuse, they will contact their line manager for advice and support. This is in line with our internal procedures and will aim to introduce a checking mechanism to help prevent misrepresentation of events and/or failure to spot warning signs.

Housing Options

Staff will listen without judgement, offering advice and support where appropriate to meet the individual needs of victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence in the home, ensuring their response to the perpetrator of domestic violence does not leave the victim more vulnerable to further abuse. These options include:

- Strengthening the victims/survivors' right to remain in their home by, for example, transferring their tenancy into their own name where possible and making effective use of management transfers so that they can make planned moves without becoming homeless.
- Providing additional security measures where agreed.
- Responding sensitively to rechargeable repairs by assessing them on a case by case basis and considering whether recharge is appropriate.
- Supporting victims/survivors to gain legal information and advice.

Our approach will be consistent and systematic to safeguard victims.

Effectively Working with Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse & Other Forms of Violence in the Home

Staff will work with the perpetrators of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home to discuss the housing options available to them. Use of management points can be considered to assist the perpetrator in their decision to terminate their part of the tenancy, allowing the victim to remain in their home. We will provide support to Police Scotland and other external agencies in dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home.

We will take reasonable steps available to us to recover costs from perpetrators for damage caused to Kingdom Group property. We will use all routes available to us in delivering this policy including seeking recovery of possession of the property where we are legally able to do so.

5. Homelessness

This policy aims to reduce the impact of homelessness on victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home. Research by Scottish Women's Aid concluded that housing was one of the main challenges individuals face when ending a relationship with an abusive partner. Ending the relationship often results in victims being made homeless, adding additional emotional and financial stress.

The Kingdom Group will:

- Provide a clear homeless pathway for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home.
- Support victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home to provide information on housing options available and support them to obtain safe and secure temporary accommodation and access to refuges for women and children.
- Review allocations for rehousing to ensure that victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence in the home will no longer be at risk.
- Collaborate and coordinate with partner agencies to provide storage to enable individuals to keep their possessions.
- Provide financial advice and assistance to ensure victims/survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home are not further in debt as a result of the homelessness process.
- Provide assistance to those experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence within the home by applying reasonable discretion to our agreed rechargeable repairs procedure.

6. Monitoring and Review

Operational delivery and monitoring of actions taken under this policy is undertaken primarily by the Housing Management Team Leader. The performance will be reviewed by the Housing Management Team Leader and Head of Housing.

This policy will be formally reviewed 5 years from the date of implementation; which will be the date the policy is approved by the governing body. We will review the policy on an annual basis or to consider specific changes in legislation or guidance. In the event that this policy is not formally reviewed within the above timescale, the latest approved policy will continue to apply.

KINGDOM HOUSING GROUP

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Policy drawn up with reference to:

Chartered Institute of Housing: Domestic Abuse; a Good Practice Guide for Social Landlords

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill 2020

Equality Act 2010

Fife Cares

Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

Public Health Scotland: Overview of Gender-Based Violence

Scottish Social Housing Charter 2017

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Reviewed by: Matthew Busher, Interim Director of Housing

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Next review date: February 2026