

Domestic Abuse Policy

The Riverside Group

GENERAL - INTERNAL

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1. Purpose

Riverside recognises that Domestic Abuse (DA) cuts across all sectors of our society, irrespective of social class, economic status, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. The impacts of DA can be long lasting and have devastating impacts on survivors and their families.

This policy sets out how The Riverside Group (TRG) view Domestic Abuse and how we will respond to reports of Domestic Abuse or cases where domestic abuse is suspected.

This policy applies to England and Wales only, with Riverside Scotland having its own Domestic Abuse policy.

In cases involving staff of TRG experiencing Domestic Abuse, we will follow our Domestic Abuse Staff Policy, Wellbeing Policy, offer tailored support and signpost to external agencies where appropriate.

The Home Office defines Domestic Abuse in the following way:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling¹, coercive² or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

¹ **Controlling behaviour** – 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, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

² **Coercive behaviour** – an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

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The Domestic Abuse Act 2021³ states;

1 The behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is Domestic Abuse if -

- (a) “A” and “B” are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) The behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following –

- (a) Physical or sexual abuse
- (b) Violent or threatening behaviour
- (c) Controlling or coercive behaviour
- (d) Economic abuse
- (e) Psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

2 Definition of “personally connected”

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies –
 - (a) They are, or have been, married to each-other
 - (b) They are, or have been, civil partners of each other
 - (c) They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
 - (d) They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not) this agreement has been terminated)
 - (e) They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
 - (f) They have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
 - (g) They are relatives

³ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

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2. Scope

This policy covers any customer or other person over 16 who resides in a property owned or managed by TRG, a managed agent, a person who receives services from our floating support provisions, any other person who may contact us for assistance or those we suspect are experiencing Domestic Abuse.

Under Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Children (under the age of 18) are considered as victims of Domestic Abuse in their own right if they:

- See or hear, experience the effects of, the abuse, and
- The perpetrator and/or the adult victim of the abuse either have parental responsibility for the child or are related to the child

3. Principles

Accessibility

3.1 We will support those who are experiencing Domestic Abuse irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

3.2 We will ensure residents and agencies are able to report Domestic Abuse in a variety of ways and each report will be investigated thoroughly.

3.3 Reports will be acknowledged within one working day and a safe method of contact/ongoing communication will be established at the first point of contact.

3.4 Individuals can self-refer for support. We will also investigate reports of suspected Domestic Abuse reported to us by neighbours or contractors. Such reports will be dealt with using high levels of tact and discretion.

3.5 We can provide interpreting and translation services where needed.

3.6 We will give people experiencing Domestic Abuse the opportunity to have a staff member of a specific gender deal with their case where necessary.

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Confidentiality

3.7 We will deal with all reports of Domestic Abuse in a non-judgemental, sympathetic manner and in confidence.

3.8 We will work collaboratively with partner agencies, in line with Local Information Sharing Agreements (LISAs) to provide coordinated, meaningful responses and support to those living with or fleeing Domestic Abuse.

3.9 We will arrange for interviews to be held at safe locations away from the customers home or our offices where a person feels able to speak freely where necessary.

3.10 Information concerning Domestic Abuse cases will be stored securely on our case management system. We will ensure GDPR is adhered to and the customers right to privacy is respected at all times.

3.11 We will only take action with the consent of the victim. Exceptions to this would be where we consider a child to be at risk or if there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone involved. If this is found to be the case, the victim will be informed of what action we will take and who we will be sharing their information with, such as police and local authorities, including invoking our internal Safeguarding procedures where a case highlights a safeguarding concern.

Empowering our customers

3.12 We will manage our customers' expectations from the outset and explain what our next step will be at each stage of the process.

3.13 The needs and wishes of the customer will be at the forefront of our decision making.

3.14 We will empower our customers to make informed decisions about their own future.

3.15 We will be patient and understand that each victim/survivor will make changes in their own time. We will support this and ensure customers know that they are always able to return to the service in future if they need assistance.

3.16 We will support our customers in making a report to the Police and can make a report on their behalf, with their consent, if they are too fearful to make a report themselves.

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3.17 We will make referrals to relevant internal teams for additional support to provide a holistic approach (for example, money advice and tenancy sustainability).

Partnership collaboration

3.18 We will establish links with local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) to ensure we are kept up to date with cases where our customers have been identified as high risk of murder or serious harm resulting from Domestic Abuse.

3.19 We will work with partner agencies such as local Police and Crime Commissioners offices, fire service and regional police forces where necessary to improve security at a customers' home and offer tailored safety planning advice depending on the identified risks.

3.20 We will attend multi agency meetings as requested. Including but not limited to, Strategy meetings, Child in Need meetings and Child Protection Conferences.

3.21 We will encourage our customers to engage with support services and promote the benefits of them doing so.

Interventions

3.22 We will work with partner agencies to improve the safety and security of our properties where we are aware of incident/s of Domestic Abuse. Target hardening, additional security measures such as lock changes, rechargeable repairs or a potential move will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be led by the risks identified. We will liaise with Local Authorities as appropriate when a customer is to be rehoused via a different Local Authority.

3.23 We will liaise with pre-approved contractors carrying out target hardening measures to our properties on behalf of Local Authorities via Police and Crime Commissioners Offices'. We will have clear processes in place with such organisations to allow prompt referrals to be made to us for ongoing support.

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Action against perpetrators

3.24 We may take tenancy enforcement action against perpetrators of Domestic Abuse where it is appropriate to do so. This will only be done if it does not compromise the safety of the victim/survivor.

3.25 In cases of intentional damage caused to our property, we may provide a statement to Police to assist with criminal proceedings against a perpetrator of Domestic Abuse.

3.26 We will liaise with specialist partner agencies to encourage our customers who are perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to seek support for their behaviour and signpost accordingly.

Information and Training

3.27 We will ensure that employees of The Riverside Group, especially those in customer facing roles, including contractors, receive appropriate training on how to recognise the signs of Domestic Abuse and have a clear pathway to promptly refer a customer for Domestic Abuse support.

3.28 We will raise awareness of Domestic Abuse across the organisation and in our communities via newsletters, our online platforms including social media and external website and through engaging with local domestic abuse services.

3.29 Our call centre staff will be trained on how to engage with a caller who contacts us to report that they are a victim of Domestic Abuse, or report concerns they have for another person. Staff will be aware of what information they need to obtain at this critical stage to establish safe contact with the person going forward.

3.30 We will be able to identify specialist support services for a range of customers depending on their circumstances and characteristics (for example, male survivors of Domestic Abuse, those fleeing honour-based abuse and customers from our LGBTQI+ community)

3.31 Best practise advice, process maps and referral pathways will be kept up to date on Riversides internal staff intranet, making information accessible for all colleagues to get further information and/or refer to the service.

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Safeguarding

3.32 We are committed to safeguarding our customers. Staff receive mandatory training which includes how to identify signs of possible domestic abuse and factors which may increase risk such as pregnancy or substance abuse. When Domestic Abuse is disclosed, we will be clear about confidentiality and our safeguarding obligations, both internally as an organisation and explain the role of the Local Authority and Police.

4. Further Information & Support

Riverside documents associated with this policy

Domestic Abuse Procedure
 ASB Policy and Procedure
 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 Safeguarding Children Policy
 Safeguarding Adults Policy
 Modern Slavery Statement
 Hate Crime Policy
 Data Protection Policy
 Complaints Policy

Relevant legislation and guidance

Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime and Policing Act 2014
 Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 Equality Act 2010
 Human Rights Act 1988
 The Care Act 2014
 The Childrens Act 1989
 Working together to Safeguard Children 2018

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5. Roles and Responsibilities

Group Board and Executive Directors

- Provide overall leadership and approval of the policy
- Monitor the Organisations approach to DA as we work towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) Accreditation

Directors

- Champion DA across directorate, keeping awareness of the issue high and encouraging staff to report all incidents to allow for meaningful reporting and trend analysis

Heads of Service and Service Managers

- Knowledge of cases in designated area deemed 'high risk'
- Ensure good case management including multi-agency approach and contemporaneous record keeping
- Encourage staff to link in with DA Specialist, Safeguarding Officer or Customer Safety Team as needed

DA Specialist and Customer Safety Team

- Offer advice and guidance in cases of DA or where DA is suspected but not proven (victim/survivor has not yet disclosed)
- Effectively manage complex cases of DA
- Establish good working relationships with relevant partner agencies
- Advice on case management, best practise and referral options
- Champion our response to DA and the service Riverside offer to colleagues, customers and stakeholders

All Staff including Front Line Workers and CSC

- Actively demonstrate Riversides values when dealing with a case of Domestic Abuse
- Seek advice or guidance if unsure
- Attend DA training identified for specific job role
- Awareness of local support services and referral pathways

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Key risks to the successful implementation/ operation of this policy	Measures in place to try and prevent them from occurring
Obtaining 'buy in' from staff and changing preconceived notions and/or stereotypes of a 'typical' DA Survivor and perpetrator.	Promote awareness, role specific training, highlighting changes in legislation and what they mean for us as a responsible Registered Social Landlord (RSL).
Insular working - considering a case based solely from our role as an RSL.	Partnership collaboration at the heart of case management, working with relevant agencies to make a real difference for our customers and their families. Including building relationships with partner agencies, attending regular meetings where appropriate.
A customer might be reluctant to report DA to Riverside as they may not be aware that we are able to assist.	Promote both internally and externally (RIC, TRG website, community events etc) that we are experienced and competent in dealing with DA. Build trust with customers and partner agencies by ensure cases are dealt with thoroughly.
There will always be unforeseen circumstances (such as COVID-19 lockdown) which poses a risk that we cannot necessarily plan for.	<p>Various ways to report incidents to us ensuring the customer can obtain advice based on their specific circumstances and the (sometimes limited) time they have available to speak to us.</p> <p>Safe method of ongoing contact established at first point of contact.</p> <p>As the DA Salesforce module develops, we will be able to highlight trends in particular areas and target resources as required, working with</p>

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	<p>local partner agencies to bring about change.</p> <p>Quick exit button on external website with ability to self-refer for support.</p> <p>Working with our Marketing and Communications team to promote DA support services at times when incidences of DA are proven to increase, such as Christmas and the football season.</p>
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7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Riverside's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

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