

Paragon Asra Housing Limited

Domestic Abuse

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Owning manager

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Department

Housing Services

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Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) is committed to equality and diversity. This policy has considered the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics which are: race, gender, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage, civil marriage and partnership, and pregnancy and maternity explicitly.

We will make sure that all of our communication is fully accessible and to achieve this if a policy or document needs to be available in other formats we will provide them.

AUDIT LOG

Date of change	Who updated	Details of the change

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) recognises the effect that domestic abuse has on the quality of life of the customer, other customers and their local neighbourhood. PA Housing is committed to dealing with acts of domestic abuse and will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations to provide advice and support to customers and their children affected by such abuse. This will be in line with current legislation and good practice.
- 1.2 This policy applies to tenants, leaseholders, licensees and shared owners, although the level of service provided to leaseholders and shared owners will be restricted to advice and support only, as rehousing options are not applicable.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 This policy explains what domestic abuse is and how we will deal with reports of this. Domestic abuse in itself may not be anti-social behaviour, but this policy should be read together with the Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Crime policies, which explain how we manage all types of anti-social behaviour.
- 2.2 Reference should also be made to the Safeguarding policy in cases of abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Domestic abuse does not always mean physical violence and anyone can be subject to it. It may happen only once, but more usually forms a pattern of behaviour where the abuse is repeated and gets worse over time.
- 3.2 The Home Office defines domestic abuse as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse.
- 3.3 Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and /or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 3.4 Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim. This also includes so called 'honour based' violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.
- 3.5 Domestic abuse involves the power and control by one person over another. It can occur in all domestic situations, regardless of the race, gender, sexuality, age and religion, mental or physical ability of those involved.
- 3.6 Domestic abuse can take the form of one or more of the following: slapping, punching, kicking, bruising, ridicule, constant criticism, threats, manipulation, sleep deprivation, social isolation, denying access to money and other controlling behaviour.

4. Key points of policy

- 4.1 PA housing will work with partner agencies to reduce domestic abuse by:
- Supporting families who are experiencing domestic abuse and its associated issues. Everyone has the right to be safe from fear and abuse
 - Raising awareness of domestic abuse
 - Providing appropriate levels of training to officers, including basic awareness
 - Adopting a robust approach towards managing domestic abuse
 - Acting upon all reports of domestic abuse consistently in line with service standards
 - Signposting customers subject to abuse to the appropriate support agencies
- 4.2 We will follow locally agreed information-sharing protocols and procedures when dealing with cases of domestic abuse. We will ensure that we respond promptly and sympathetically. Local procedures will reflect the aims of this policy and explore all possible remedies.
- 4.3 All reports of domestic abuse will be treated sensitively and in confidence. Throughout the process there will be a high level of victim-centred support.
- 4.4 We will use a combination of informal action and legal and enforcement action to deliver a forward-thinking, comprehensive and user-friendly service.
- 4.5 Managing reports of domestic abuse requires a multi-agency approach. PA Housing will work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that victims, with their consent, receive specialist advice and support.

Examples of our approach are:

Sanctuary type scheme - this is a multi-agency victim-centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own home and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and support. The name of these schemes varies from region to region.

Outreach - we will seek to support all customers who report domestic abuse. This may be by signposting to the appropriate outreach service.

Management transfers - sometimes it may be unsafe for a customer to go back to their home and housing options will be discussed. If appropriate and where local arrangements are in place, management transfers will be considered at the local authority's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) meeting. Sometimes decisions will be made at the meeting and in some areas a decision will be made in writing outside the meeting.

- 4.6 The new home will have all of the appropriate, necessary security measures fitted. Rent arrears will not prevent a management transfer if appropriate. An agreement will be sought to pay off the debt over time if necessary.
- 4.7 We will normally require the customer to approach their local authority for assistance with emergency re-housing through homelessness legislation. A management transfer on the grounds of domestic abuse could be denied if the victim refuses to move out of the borough or change their children's school.
- 4.8 Approval for a management transfer must be signed by the Head of Housing

Services, who will require supporting evidence from the police or other agencies involved, along with a risk matrix before a decision can be made.

- 4.9 The victim will be advised to take steps to ensure that they keep themselves safe and not to disclose to the perpetrator where they have moved too. They will be advised that it will not be possible to move them again.
- 4.10 Victims of domestic abuse who flee or are required to move in order to safeguard the welfare of themselves and their family should not be out of pocket as a result. Funding will be made available to assist the costs of a move.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 PA Housing will follow legislation and positive practice guidelines on data protection and confidentiality. Information will be passed to statutory agencies where required by law. Otherwise, personal sensitive information will only be passed onto third parties if there is an information sharing agreement in place and the victim is happy for the information to be shared.
- 5.2 PA Housing will ensure that other agencies will be involved and information shared with the consent of the customer concerned unless:
 - the information is necessary for the protection of children
 - PA Housing is required to by law to share information, for example PA Housing cannot withhold information if being questioned by the police during a criminal investigation

6. Case closure

- 6.1 Any case relating to domestic abuse will be closed when action has been taken against the abuser and they have either stopped their behaviour or moved away from the household, or no further action is available due to lack of evidence. Unfortunately some cases have to be closed even if not resolved.
- 6.2 We will discuss our decision to close the case with the victim before doing so and confirm the closure in writing and our reasons. Cases can be reopened if problems continue or arise again.
- 6.3 If steps are taken to evict an abuser as a direct result of their behaviour, they will not be given a joint tenancy again if they subsequently return to the home.
- 6.4 Any complaints about our handling of a case should be made through the Complaints policy.

7. Training

- 7.1 We will carry out induction and refresher training for all frontline staff to make sure that are aware of our policy. We will provide appropriate levels of training to staff, including basic awareness training, how to support someone who may be abused and how to advise them about what they can do.

8. Monitoring and reporting

- 8.1 A database is maintained to record and manage all cases of domestic

abuse and case reviews are carried out fortnightly by the managers to ensure consistency in case management and improve performance.

- 8.2 In line with good practice, regular checks will be undertaken on 10% of cases to ensure quality and consistency in our approach and that victims are offered appropriate support.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 Customers were consulted on whether this policy is clear, reasonable and easy to understand. Where customers didn't find the policy clear, we changed parts of it to meet their suggestions. Customers who took part in the consultation were sent a summary to explain how their feedback was used.

10. Equality analysis

- 10.2 This policy has been subject to an equality analysis to make sure that we do not illegally discriminate against anyone and that it is fair to everyone.

11. Legislation

- 11.1 The following legislation has been considered:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2015
- The Protection from Harassment act 1997
- Family Law Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1985, 1988, 1996 and 2004
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

12. Linked policies

Anti-social Behaviour
Hate Crime
Hoarding
Tenure