

I4B Holdings

Domestic Abuse Policy

May 2017

1 Introduction and Scope

This policy sets out how I4B Holdings will support our customers who are experiencing domestic abuse.

We use the term “domestic abuse” to encompass acts of violence against an individual by a partner or family member as well as acts of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour. (See Section 6, Definitions.)

2 Aims and Objectives

The key aims and objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure that I4B and contractor staff are trained and equipped to respond to reports of domestic abuse;
- Support customers experiencing domestic abuse;
- Provide customers with advice and assistance;
- Work in partnership with community partners and specialists in supporting customers experiencing domestic abuse.

3 External Related Documents

HCA Regulatory Framework (Neighbourhood and Community Standard). [Click here for publication.](#)

Domestic Violence-A Guide to Civil Remedies and Criminal Sanctions (Published: Her Majesty’s Court Service, 2003, updated 2007.) [Click here for publication.](#)

Brent Council’s Anti-social Behaviour Procedure/Policy

Brent Council’s Allocations Policy

4 Legal Framework

The police can use the criminal law to bring proceedings against a violent partner or family member for offences including:

- Murder or manslaughter (actual or attempted)
- Rape or indecent assault
- Unlawful wounding
- Grievous bodily harm
- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm
- Aggravated assault
- Common assault
- Intimidating a witness
- Harming or threatening a witness
- Harassment and putting a person in fear of violence

The Housing Act 1996 introduced an indirect means of protecting victims of domestic violence because it relies on a third party – their landlord – applying for a possession order. Only a landlord – or more specifically, a local authority or social landlord – can take action under this Act if it is brought to their attention, or it is alleged, that a tenant is being violent towards another tenant.

This civil remedy also depends on the tenant who is experiencing domestic violence leaving the property with no intention of returning. It is, therefore, simply a way that the landlord can regain a property by taking action against an abuser who remains in

occupation. It does not enable the victim of violence to stay in the property. Nor does it provide any protection – in the form of an injunction – in another location.

5

Definitions

The cross-government definition of **domestic violence and abuse** is:

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:

Emotional, psychological and mental - emotional, psychological and mental abuse are often closely linked terms that can be used interchangeably. The aim of the perpetrator of emotional abuse in relationships is to reduce confidence and esteem in order to make their victim increasingly reliant on them. They use tactics such as intimidation, bullying, constant criticism and keeping someone isolated from family and friends in order to exert control. Emotional abuse in relationships is often a means of controlling the victim by having a strong mental hold over them.

Emotional abuse in relationships can include (but is not limited to):

- Constant put downs which make their victim feel stupid, worthless and useless;
- Making them feel that they are a bad/incapable parent;
- Making them feel ugly or fat;
- Telling them they are mad or ill;
- Isolating them from family and friends;
- Not allowing them out alone, constant checking up or following them;
- Playing on their fears or phobias;
- Ignoring or using silence against the victim;
- Making false allegations about them or endlessly making accusations.

Physical - physical abuse is the most visible form of domestic abuse. It includes such behaviour as slapping, burning, beating, kicking, biting, stabbing and can lead to permanent injuries and sometimes death.

Sexual - sexual abuse includes rape, forced sexual acts and sexual degradation. Any sexual act that involves force (including emotional blackmail) is abuse - this includes pestering, name calling and threatening to get sex from 'elsewhere' in order to manipulate someone who does not want to have sex at that time into having sex. Sexually abusive relationships can include being forced to watch pornography as well as being forced into having sex with the perpetrator's friends or into prostitution.

Financial - this may be limiting access to money or other resources, or by forcing all financial responsibility onto their victim while limiting their ability to provide this.

Financial abuse may include:

- Taking money from them;
- Not allowing them access to shared money;
- Making them account for everything spent;
- Making them beg for money;
- Preventing them from gaining employment;
- Causing them to lose, or forcing them to give up, employment;
- Taking out loans, credit cards or running up debts in the victim's name;
- Forcing them to commit crimes for money;
- Not allowing them to buy necessities, for themselves or their children, including sufficient food;

- Financial abuse can also be when the perpetrator is spending money needed to maintain the home on themselves.

Financial abuse may continue after a relationship has ended, through the withholding of child maintenance.

Controlling behaviour

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 needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour

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.

6 Policy Statement

6.1 Introduction

As I4B's properties are managed through contractors, this policy sets out the procedures we expect our contractors to follow. We will ensure our contractors work with and support our customers experiencing domestic abuse. All references in this document to actions 'we' will take should be taken to mean the actions we expect of our contractors.

I4B recognises that domestic abuse can happen in many different ways and that acts of violence may not always be part of the abuse that an individual is experiencing.

Victims of domestic abuse may be scared and embarrassed to approach agencies to report the abuse. When a customer reports domestic abuse to us we will be sensitive, non-judgemental and always accept that what they are telling us is true.

We offer a victim-centred approach which means that we will only contact the police, alleged perpetrator or make a referral to a specialist support agency with the express agreement of the victim. Additionally, any support that we might offer as a landlord will only be with the agreement of the victim.

6.2 Receiving a report of domestic abuse

Where the report is made by the victim, we will offer and carry out a face to face interview within 1-working day (unless the victim requests a phone interview) at a venue to be agreed with the victim (subject to satisfying any concerns about staff safety).

Where the report is received out-of-hours, we will sign post the victim to specialist support agencies that can offer support.

Where the report is made by a professional third party, we will establish what details are already known, including what action is required from us.

We will record in writing all reports of domestic abuse, even when the victim wishes no further action to be taken.

6.3 Carrying out an initial interview

We will:

- If requested, make available an officer of the same gender as the victim to carry out the interview;
- Carry out the interview in a location of the victim's choice (subject to satisfying any concerns about staff safety);
- Arrange an interpreter if needed. We will not allow children to be used as interpreters;
- Try to ascertain if there are any children at risk and follow our Joint Safeguarding Policy if that is the case;
- Try to ascertain if there are others in the household at risk and follow our Joint Safeguarding Policy if that is the case;
- Discuss ways in which we can offer support regarding housing options;
- Tell the victim about other support services available and offer to make a referral;
- Discuss whether or not the victim wants to report the matter to the police.
- Agree an appointment for a follow-up interview, if required;
- Agree with the victim what actions (if any) they wish us to take and what actions (if any) they wish to carry out themselves;
- Record in writing all interviews, even when the victim wishes no further action to be taken.

6.4 **Staff Training**

We recognise that I4B's contractors may be the first points of contact for victims of domestic abuse. Also, that staff may spot signs of domestic abuse even if it has not been reported.

We will ensure our contractors:

- Provide all customer-facing staff with training to equip them to recognise possible signs of domestic abuse;
- Provide our housing staff with training on how to deal sensitively and appropriately with both reported and suspected domestic abuse.

6.5 **Confidentiality**

I4B, through our contractors, maintain all of its records and data on our customers in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1996. We particularly recognise the relevance of this – and the risks to personal safety - in cases of domestic abuse. We will:

- Not give out any information to a third party without the written consent of the victim;
- Not make contact with the alleged perpetrator without the written consent of the victim. Where the victim has given consent in writing we will always inform the victim of the date and time that we are planning to make contact or the date when we will send any written correspondence;
- Store information securely and in such a way that confidential information from the victim cannot be accessed by a joint tenant where the joint tenant is the alleged perpetrator.

We will ensure our contractors only share information with other agencies without the consent of the victim where it is necessary for the protection of children or we are required to provide information as part of a criminal investigation.