

# Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy

No one should experience the trauma of abuse or feel unsafe at home. This policy explains the help and support that can be provided by Camden Council's housing teams.



# **Contents**

<b>1. Purpose</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Scope</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Definitions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Policy statement</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1. Our principles	<b>9</b>
<b>6. Domestic Abuse and the Law</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. Our approach</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8. Confidentiality and data protection</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>9. Perpetrator accountability</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10. Complaints and accountability</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>11. Diversity, inclusion, and holistic services</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>12. Review</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>13. Related documents</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>14. Information and version control</b>	<b>15</b>

# 1. Purpose

No one should experience the trauma of abuse or feel unsafe at home. This policy sets out the approach that will be followed by Camden Council's housing teams when identifying and responding to domestic abuse.

This policy has been created in partnership with people with lived experience of domestic abuse, homelessness, and housing insecurity. It is accompanied by a Survivor's 'Know your Rights' Handbook, which can be found here: [camden.gov.uk/da-housing-policy](https://camden.gov.uk/da-housing-policy)

# 2. Scope

This policy sets out the response and support that will be provided to anyone experiencing domestic abuse if they approach our housing teams. This applies to:

- All Camden Council tenants and their household members.
- Homeless applicants, this includes people that have made a homeless application and are at risk of/experiencing domestic abuse within other accommodation, for example, private rented accommodation, a housing association property.
- People receiving housing support through another means, for example, through our floating support provision.

This policy applies to all employees of the London Borough of Camden and any contractors who are engaged to carry out services on our behalf.

# 3. Definitions

## **What is domestic abuse?**

Domestic abuse can happen to people of any race, age, sexuality, religion, gender, or class. Domestic abuse is highly gendered: most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women. People with disabilities or people who identify as LGBTQIA+ are also at greater risk. Research also shows that Black, Asian, and minoritised survivors also face additional barriers when accessing domestic abuse support.

Domestic abuse can happen in relationships with family members and with ex-partners. Domestic abuse is not always physical violence, there are lots of different kinds of abuse. Children that witness, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse are also considered victims.

We recognise that there are differing views on the use of the words 'victim' and/or 'survivor'. At Camden Council, we use 'survivor' in recognition of the strength and resilience of an individual who has suffered domestic abuse. However, we understand that some may prefer the term 'victim' as they are an individual a crime has been committed against. We will always use the term preferred by the individual.

## Legal definition of domestic abuse

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) defines domestic abuse as any of the following:

Definitions	
Type of abuse	Explainer
<b>Controlling or coercive behaviour</b>	Coercive and controlling behaviour is a range of acts that make a person feel dependent or controlled. This often includes isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence, and regulating their everyday behaviour. This can begin subtly and then escalate.
<b>Economic or financial abuse</b>	Economic abuse involves controlling someone's access to money, goods, or financial resources. This can affect someone's ability to support themselves and can force them to depend on the perpetrator financially.
<b>Psychological and/or emotional abuse</b>	Psychological abuse and/or emotional abuse involves the regular and deliberate use of words and actions used to manipulate, hurt, weaken, or frighten a person mentally and emotionally. This can distort, confuse, and influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives. This can make them doubt themselves and their sense of reality, causing them emotional harm.
<b>Physical abuse</b>	Physical abuse can include kicking, punching, strangling, slapping, biting, pinching, pulling hair, burning, and throwing items including household objects and more. It can also include behaviour that makes the survivor fear that they could be physically harmed or hurt.
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	Sexual abuse is when someone forces, coerces, or manipulates another person into sexual activity with or without their consent. This can involve physical acts, such as touching or intercourse, as well as non-physical acts like making someone view sexual images or videos against their will. It is a violation of a person's body and rights, causing deep emotional and psychological harm.
<b>Violent or threatening behaviour</b>	Violent or threatening 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.
<b>So-called 'honour' based violence</b>	So-called 'honour-based' abuse (including so-called 'honour-based' violence) is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the so-called honour of the family and/or community. This happens across many different communities and cultures.

Definitions	
Type of abuse	Explainer
<b>Forced marriage</b>	A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties, where people feel pressured and forced.
<b>Female genital mutilation (FGM)</b>	Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is sometimes referred to as female circumcision or female genital cutting.

A link to the full legal definition of domestic abuse can be found [here](#). The Survivor’s ‘know your rights’ Handbook also provides further information and examples of these types of domestic abuse.

**Personally connected:**

The Domestic Abuse Act states that for a situation to be considered domestic abuse there must be a personal relationship between the survivor and perpetrator(s). This can be in a past or a present relationship. The Domestic Abuse Act refers to this as “personally connected”, this includes people who:

- are married to each other;
- are civil partners of each other;
- have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement is still in place);
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether the agreement is still in place);
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other, for example, boyfriends, girlfriends, sexual or romantic partners;
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children;
- are relatives or family, i.e, mother, father, brother, sister, child, aunty, uncle.

Importantly, children who experience, hear, see, or witness the effects of domestic abuse are considered victim-survivors of domestic abuse. More information on supporting child victim-survivors can be found in the Survivor’s ‘know your rights’ Handbook.

## Other definitions used within this policy

The terms “we”, “our” and “us” refer to Camden Council.

Term	Description
Alleged Perpetrator/s	The <b>alleged perpetrator</b> is the person or persons alleged to have used abusive behaviour or caused harm.
Camden Safety Net (CSN)	<b>Camden Safety Net (CSN)</b> is the domestic and sexual abuse service which provides support to anyone who lives, works, or studies in Camden. They provide independent, confidential, and non-judgemental support to survivors of abuse of all genders, aged 16 plus. CSN can provide support with safety planning, risk assessment, advocacy, housing, benefits, and referrals to legal support. More information can be found, <a href="#">here</a> .  You can self-refer by calling: <b>020 7974 2526</b> , or email <a href="mailto:camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk">camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk</a>
Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	<b>MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference)</b> is a regular, multi-agency panel for domestic abuse cases where there is a high risk of murder and serious harm. MARACs are highly confidential panels in which information is shared for the purposes of harm and risk reduction.
Gender-based Violence (GBV)	<b>Gender-based Violence</b> is abuse and violence directed against a person because of that person’s gender or abuse that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. This includes Violence Against Women and Girls, domestic abuse, and transphobia.
Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate (IDSVA)	<b>IDSVAs</b> are qualified domestic and sexual abuse workers, who will support survivors to assess the level of risk and develop safety plans. CSN’s IDSVA’s work with a survivor over the short- to medium-term to put them on the path to long-term safety.
Safeguarding	<b>Safeguarding</b> aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable adults and children who are experiencing or are at risk from abuse or neglect.
Specialist by and for service	A <b>specialist ‘by and for’ service</b> is an organisation that is run and delivered by members of a specific community for that community. For example, London Black Women’s Project is a specialist domestic abuse and violence charity run by black women for black women.
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	<b>VAWG</b> refers to types of abuse and forms of harm which are experienced by women and girls. This includes domestic abuse, sexual abuse and violence, trafficking, domestic servitude and modern slavery, sexual harassment, transactional and safety sex, transphobia, and prostitution.
Witness	<b>Witnesses</b> will have seen or heard an incident happening.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><b>London Borough of Camden – Registered Provider of Social Housing</b></p>	<p>As a registered provider of Social Housing that is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, Camden Council has a duty to identify and respond to domestic abuse within our Council homes.</p> <p>We do this by ensuring that we have a clear policy and procedures in place for all of our employees and third parties who deliver services on our behalf. This includes mandatory domestic abuse training and awareness work. This policy and the Survivor’s ‘know your rights’ Handbook set out the ways we offer support and what you can expect from us.</p>
<p><b>London Borough of Camden – Local Authority</b></p>	<p>As a Local Authority, Camden Council plays an important role in responding to domestic abuse and working with victim-survivors to safeguard them, their children and wider community from the trauma of abuse. This includes support to access safe housing through a <a href="#">homeless application</a> and/or via the <a href="#">Housing Register</a>. Our work is supported by domestic abuse procedures and mandatory domestic abuse training for our staff.</p>
<p><b>Camden Safety Net</b></p>	<p>Camden Safety Net (CSN) is the domestic and sexual abuse service which provides support to anyone who lives, works, or studies in Camden. Their team of Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocates (IDSVAs) provide advice and support. They can provide information on housing options and help with referrals into specialist housing support.</p>
<p><b>Adult Social Care</b></p>	<p>Adult Social Care are responsible for safeguarding vulnerable adults with care and support needs and people who are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect.</p>
<p><b>Children’s Social Care</b></p>	<p>Children’s Social Care are responsible for supporting children, young people and their family.</p> <p>They are responsible for safeguarding children who are experiencing or at risk of abuse. They are also responsible for meeting the needs of ‘children in need’, this can include helping with essentials like food and housing.</p>
<p><b>The Police</b></p>	<p>The Police are responsible for detecting, responding to, and investigating domestic abuse related crimes. They have a duty to safeguard domestic abuse survivors and the public.</p>



## 5. Policy statement

Domestic abuse is a traumatic crime. We believe that no one should experience this or feel unsafe at home. We are committed to providing safe homes and building healthy communities in which all people can thrive. We recognise the essential role that access to safe housing plays when responding to domestic abuse and, as a landlord and a local authority, we are determined to do all we can to support survivors and to end abuse.

We know that domestic abuse can cause homelessness and that people experiencing homelessness are at heightened risk of domestic abuse and VAWG. To reduce the trauma and harm associated with this, we will work to identify survivors of domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity and provide robust advice and support to prevent homelessness. We will not wait for risk to escalate: any abuse, whatever this looks like, is unacceptable and we are here to help.

We recognise that street homeless survivors face additional barriers to safety; we will provide specialist outreach support to help this group. We know that many survivors will have developed ways to cope with the trauma of abuse that they have experienced, and this can include using alcohol and substances. Our message to anyone experiencing abuse is clear: we will not judge you and we recognise the pivotal role that abuse has played in shaping your needs and experiences.

### 5.1. Our principles

This policy has been created and written with survivors with lived experience of domestic abuse, homelessness, and housing insecurity. The following principles capture our vision for change and underpin our housing response.

#### A rights-based approach:

- We will make sure that survivors are given clear information and support them to understand their rights. We will honour and respect their right to a safe home.

#### Safety and survivor-led support:

- The safety of survivors is our main priority: we will listen to and work in partnership with survivors when providing support.

#### Time-critical support:

- We acknowledge the urgency needed when responding to domestic abuse: we will work quickly to respond to a survivor's needs.

#### Trauma-informed, in practice:

- Domestic abuse is traumatic. We know that trauma affects people differently and survivors might not fit the stereotype of a 'victim': they might feel or act frustrated, defensive, and angry. Our staff are trained to be aware of the effects of trauma and abuse and will work in a way that is compassionate and understanding.

#### A multi-agency and integrated offer:

- With the survivor's consent, we will work with departments and our partners to provide the support and help that they need. This can include referrals to specialist support and services.

### Empathetic, human, and validating responses:

- We will provide support that is empathetic, reassuring, and non-judgemental. We will acknowledge the strength of survivors and recognise the difficulties they experience. We seek to provide support that is empowering.

### Knowledgeable and trained staff:

- It is essential that survivors receive support from knowledgeable and informed staff. All of our staff receive annual domestic abuse training, and our housing teams receive additional specialist training and supervision.

## 6. Domestic Abuse and the Law

Many forms of abuse are a crime, this includes, but is not limited to, controlling and coercive behaviour, harassment, criminal damage, false imprisonment, sexual assault and rape, assault, threats to kill, theft and fraud, and so-called 'revenge' porn. These crimes can be reported to the Police. We understand that there are many barriers to reporting domestic abuse to the Police and we will not require you to do this to access support.

There are also options through civil law, such as applying for an injunction or non-molestation order: these are orders that can stop the perpetrator from doing certain things, such as attending a survivor's home or contacting them. You can find more information about these options in the Survivor's 'know your rights' Handbook.

Many people find it helpful to have support from a domestic abuse team whilst going through these processes. If you would like support or want to understand your options, our specialist, independent domestic abuse team, Camden Safety Net, can provide advice and help.

## 7. Our approach

### Responding to and identifying domestic abuse:

We recognise that domestic abuse is a traumatic and serious crime, and we will treat people experiencing abuse in a supportive, validating, and non-judgemental way. You can ask us for support with domestic abuse through any contact you have with us, for example, by the telephone, by email, in person or online, via the homelessness self-referral form. Any Camden Council staff member that you speak to will handle your situation sensitively and will support you to find appropriate help.

We know that there are many barriers to accessing support and that on average survivors experience **50 incidents of abuse** before getting effective help. We know that shame, stigma, and fear of not being believed can play a huge role in this. We believe that everyone should feel safe, and we want to help people at the earliest possible opportunity. To support this, we will routinely ask everyone accessing support about whether they are experiencing abuse, and we have trained our staff on the indicators of domestic abuse. If we are concerned that you are experiencing domestic abuse, our staff will attempt to speak with you to discuss what support can be provided, if it is safe to do so.

## Asking us for help

If you are experiencing, or are at risk of, domestic abuse at home, you are considered legally homeless, and we would encourage you to access housing support and advice from us. We know that it can be difficult to reach out for housing support as a domestic abuse survivor, especially if the perpetrator is controlling you and has access to your phone and devices. So, if you want to speak with us, there are a range of ways that you can make contact. This includes:

- Completing the [online self-referral form](#) to speak with our homelessness team: If you can contact us this way, this is the best way as it allows us to capture all the core information at the start.
- If you are a Camden Council tenant, you should contact your [Neighbourhood Housing Officer](#) (NHO) as there are different support pathways for current tenants.
- You can speak with any Camden employee, or any third party employed to carry out services on our behalf, for example, a repairs worker or caretaker. They should show you a copy of their work ID badge to verify their identity.
- Contacting our confidential domestic abuse team, [Camden Safety Net](#): 020 7974 2526, or [camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk](mailto:camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk)
- Asking someone else to refer you or to contact us on your behalf, such as a doctor, friend, or support worker.

**If you have nowhere safe to stay today or you need to leave immediately, please also call us or come to our offices. In an emergency, please contact the Police.**

- Call us on **020 7974 4444**
- Attend our office, 5 Pancras Square, King's Cross London, N1C 4AG
- Contact our Out of Hours team if you need urgent support after 5pm or on the weekend: **020 7974 4444**

If you tell us about domestic abuse, we will aim to respond to you urgently. All of our staff receive domestic abuse training and we will contact you to discuss the next steps. This can include booking an initial assessment with you and arranging any emergency support that is needed. At this stage, we will also ask for your permission to refer you to our specialist domestic abuse team, Camden Safety Net.

## Action

Everyone deserves to live free from the trauma of abuse: survivors are not responsible for the abuse they have experienced. If you, or any person who normally lives with you, are experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse where you live, you are likely to be considered legally homeless. This means that you can contact us to make a homeless application. You can do this even if you are still in your home: you do not need to wait to flee or leave the house

If you ask us for support, we will explore all of the options with you and provide you with help that is based on your preferences, entitlements, and the resources available to us. This could include support to remain in your home, if this is your preference, or advice on your housing options and help to leave your home.

## **We will:**

- Handle your case confidentiality and discretely.
- Provide advice and support to you regardless of the level of risk, because any abuse is intolerable and not acceptable.
- Agree a safe method for us to contact you.
- Keep in regular contact with you to provide updates and support.
- Offer to refer you to our specialist domestic abuse team, Camden Safety Net, or to a specialist service for highly confidential advice and support.
- Complete a risk assessment with you, where appropriate, and prioritise your safety when offering you support and accommodation.
- Work in partnership with you and other agencies to safeguard you and your household from harm and abuse, with your consent or where appropriate.
- Make sure that the support that we provide considers your needs and is adjusted to other parts of your life and identity, such as caring responsibilities, your sexuality, or gender-identity.
- Signpost you to specialist agencies to provide a full package of support, this could include financial advice, access to counselling, substance use support. You can find more information about these services, in the Survivor's 'know your rights' Handbook [here](#).
- Provide information in a range of formats and embed a rights-based approach, i.e., by providing the Survivor's 'know your rights' Handbook.

## **The type of housing support that we can provide will depend on your preferences, needs, and entitlements. This can include:**

- Support to make your home safe and secure with extra safety measures, such as reinforced doors and panic alarms.
- Support to understand the legal options to exclude the perpetrator from your home or stop them contacting you, if this is what you want.
- Support to understand the immediate and long-term housing options that you are eligible for by making a homeless application or through the housing register.
- Support you to access a refuge or safe alternative accommodation.

## **We will not:**

- Share information with the person that is abusing you or tell them that you have asked us for help.
- Pressure you to take legal action against the person who is causing the abuse.
- Require you to report the domestic abuse that you have experienced to the Police in order to access support.
- Pursue you for damages that have been caused by the person causing abuse.

If you have no recourse to public funds or immigration needs, we will respond to you with respect and compassion. We cannot provide immigration advice but will help you to identify lawyers that can. We will provide you with information on potential pathways to support, such as through the Children's Act. See section nine of the Survivors' Handbook.

## **8. Confidentiality and data protection**

Privacy is essential and we will treat your personal information with the strictest confidence. This means that we will not share any information without your consent, unless we are required to do so by law or unless it is necessary to safeguard a child or adult at risk. We will not share information about the domestic abuse that you have disclosed with the person who is abusing you. We will ensure that we treat personal information lawfully and correctly, in adherence with our responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018.

To make sure that our contact with you is safe and secure, we will ask you to share information on the safe way for us to contact you, i.e., via text, phone-calls, email, and we will ask you to provide a safe address for us to send letters to.

## **9. Perpetrator accountability**

We are committed to ensuring that those who perpetrate domestic abuse are held to account. The use of abusive behaviour is never excusable. It is a choice, often caused by one person's desire to gain power and control over another.

We will use the tools available to us to disrupt abuse and hold perpetrators to account, this can include taking legal action to evict them from the property. When planning any perpetrator engagement or enforcement action we will take a risk-based and survivor-led approach. In conjunction with a wider professional network, housing teams will ask the question "what actions can we take to increase the safety and wellbeing of the child and/or adult survivor?". Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, we will also look to offer support to perpetrators to change their behaviour, such as through a specialist perpetrator scheme.

We will continue to advocate for policy changes and initiatives that strengthen protections for survivors and hold perpetrator to account.

## **10. Complaints and accountability**

We are accountable for the decisions that we make and we have robust oversight and management processes to support this. We also have clear processes for raising complaints and concerns. If you are dissatisfied with the service that you have received, you can raise a complaint to the Council which will be fully investigated. Details of how to make a complaint can be found here: [camden.gov.uk/complaints](https://camden.gov.uk/complaints)

When handling a housing application, the housing decisions that we make are governed by housing law and, in some circumstances, you will have a legal right to review the decision. We will notify you of your right to review, but if you would like to know more information you can also speak with our housing team. For more information see here: [camden.gov.uk/request-a-review-of-a-housing-decision](https://camden.gov.uk/request-a-review-of-a-housing-decision)

You can also find information on support services, including law centres, through the Camden Advice Network: [camden.gov.uk/camden-advice-network](https://camden.gov.uk/camden-advice-network)

## 11. Diversity, inclusion, and holistic services

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime that overwhelmingly impacts women and people who experience other forms of oppression. For example, national evidence has shown that:

- Disabled women were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women and are more likely to live with the perpetrator.
- Trans\* people experience domestic abuse at disproportionately high levels.
- Half of gay and bi-sexual men have experienced domestic abuse.
- Older survivors experience abuse for twice as long before getting effective help.
- Black, Asian, and global majority survivors are at increased risk of domestic homicide.

Experiences of oppression and stigma place additional barriers to survivors accessing support, for example survivors have told us that they didn't feel able to share the abuse they were experiencing because they didn't want to be "another statistic" or because they feared that structural racism would result in their entire community being blamed for the abuse that they had experienced. We know that domestic abuse work must be linked with work to fight oppression. Our work to deliver this change can be found in We Make Camden, our vision for the future of Camden, [here](#). To further support this, we train all of our teams in domestic abuse and anti-oppressive practice.

**We are committed to delivering a service that is consciously inclusive and can meet the intersectional needs of survivors. To do this, we will:**

- Make sure that survivors are at the centre of decision making.
- Support survivors to access services tailored to their needs, this includes specialist 'by and for' services.
- Make sure that decisions by professionals are timely, accountable, informed, measured, ethical and compassionate.
- Capture and analyse demographics data to make sure that our services are accessible to everyone.

To make sure that our work reflects the diverse needs and experiences of survivors, we have consulted with residents that have experienced domestic abuse, homelessness, and housing insecurity to understand their experiences, needs, and vision for change. This included far-reaching consultation with people with lived experience of domestic abuse and with specialist 'by and for' organisations. Following this, we established a steering group of survivors with lived experience of domestic abuse and homelessness who helped to create this policy and the accompanying handbook.

## 12. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as required by changes in legislation, regulation, or the service. Oversight and responsibility for review is held by the Director of Housing.

## 13. Related documents

- [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)
- [Housing Allocation Scheme](#)
- [Anti-social Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- Domestic Abuse Neighbourhoods
- Domestic Abuse Homelessness Procedure
- DVA Early Detectors Procedure
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

## 14. Information and version control

Title	Domestic Abuse Housing Policy	
Document number	DVAPolicy	
Author	Hannah Slydel, Senior Policy Officer (VAWG) & Camden DVA Policy Steering group	
Responsible officer	Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing	
Audience	Public	
Policy Area	Domestic Abuse and Housing	
Consultation requirements	Internal	Completed
	External	Not required
Impact Assessment requirements	Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) completed on	15/01/2025
	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) completed on	Not required
Next review date	January 2028	
Approved by	Executive Director of Supporting Communities	
Approval date	16th October 2024	
Effective date	3 March 2025	

We are here  
to support you.



## Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy