

# PARAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION

**POLICY:** Domestic Abuse Policy

**POLICY AREA.** Housing Management

**DATE APPROVED:** 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020

**DATE DUE FOR REVIEW:** Jan 2025

## Contents

Make a Stand Pledge.....	2
Policy Statement .....	2
Policy Context .....	2
Overview .....	3
Controlling Behaviour: .....	3
Coercive Behaviour: .....	3
Paragon's Approach .....	5
Responding to a Report of Domestic Abuse .....	5
Carrying Out Initial Discussion with a Tenant / Good Practice Guidelines .....	5
Tenancies .....	7
Multi-Agency Approach .....	8
Victim Responsibilities .....	8
Confidentiality/GPDR .....	8
Equalities.....	8
Complaints or Appeals .....	9
Monitoring and Evaluation .....	9
Appendix 1 : Directory of Services .....	9

## Make a Stand Pledge

The Make a Stand pledge has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. It has been created to encourage housing organisations to make a commitment to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

Paragon Housing Association signed up to the Make a Stand Pledge in May 2019. Our commitment is to update our policies and procedures to ensure that we are offering appropriate support to both tenants and staff that are experienced domestic abuse.

## Policy Statement

Paragon Housing Association acknowledges Domestic Abuse to be a crime. Domestic abuse impacts on the quality of life of victims, their family and their friends as well as impacting on a person's home.

### Relevant Legislation

- 1) Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- 2) Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- 3) Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011
- 4) Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 Part1 & Part 2

This policy has been developed in consultation with local support agencies and with the three Local Authorities.

## Policy Context

- The levels of domestic abuse recorded by Police Scotland have remained consistent since 2011-12, with 58,000 to 60,000 incidents recorded per year. The police recorded 59,541 incidents of domestic abuse in Scotland during 2017-18, which is an increase of 1% compared to the previous year.
- In 2017-18, 44% of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by Police Scotland included the recording of at least one crime or offence.
- 4 in 5 (82%) victims of domestic abuse recorded by Police Scotland in 2017-2018 were women. However research by Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS) suggests that as many as 1 in 3 victims of Domestic Abuse may be men with only 20% of them reporting incidents. 88% of Domestic abuse incidents occurred within someone's home.
- The crime or offence that was most frequently recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident in 2017-18 was Common assault (accounting for 37% of all crimes and offences recorded). This was followed by Breach of the peace etc. which accounted for 31% of crimes and offences.



Our homes, our people,  
our problem.

We've signed the **Make a Stand** pledge  
to support people experiencing  
domestic abuse, have you?

women's aid  
until women & children are safe



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing



#makeastand  
[cih.org/makeastand](https://cih.org/makeastand)

## Overview

This policy sets out how Paragon Housing Association will take steps to assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with domestic violence or abuse, it applies to all tenants, non-tenants living with our tenants.

The Association has decided to adopt a broader definition of Domestic Abuse that that outlined in 'Domestic Abuse: A Good Practice Guide for Social Landlords' Our definition is that Domestic Abuse or Violence is: ***Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive 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:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Psychological

### Controlling Behaviour:

This includes a range of behaviour which makes a person reliant and/or dependent on another person by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacity for personal gain, depriving them of the means need for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

### Coercive Behaviour:

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 includes forced marriage and so-called 'honour violence'.

Paragon believes that its tenants and other householders should not live in fear of violence or abuse. Paragon takes domestic abuse very seriously and is committed to

providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching the organisation for assistance in cases of domestic abuse.

Paragon Housing Association's Make a Stand Pledge is to:

- a) Identify domestic abuse at the earliest stages of a tenancy including tenancy sign up and ask each joint tenant, privately and sensitively, about any history of domestic abuse. If a history is disclosed additional security measures will be considered.
- b) Enabling tenants to report domestic abuse to the organisation in different ways, including in person, in writing, by telephone, online or via a third party such as a police officer or local authority or other partner organisations .
- c) Ensure that tenants know that they can meet a member of staff in confidence at the Paragon offices or at an agreed choice of safe venue. Tenants will also be offered the option of talking to a same sex staff member.
- d) Carry out a risk assessment by using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based violence Safe Lives Risk Identification Checklist (DASH) the checklist can be found at [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk) Safely planning to provide support for the tenant and their children where present.
- e) Share information with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). For cases which meet the MARAC risk rating threshold or if there is a child protection concerns, Paragon has a legal duty to share information with relevant agencies. In cases where the threshold is not met, with the agreement of the victim, Paragon will make referrals to other support from relevant agencies (Police Scotland, Women's Aid, AMIS or Victim support etc).
- f) Paragon will agree to support any action plan implemented with the tenant, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them.
- g) Provide improved security to a victim's home (e.g. security lights, window locks) where a need is identified.
- h) Ensure that tenants experiencing domestic abuse, who wish to do so, can access appropriate services as early as possible and are offered information and advice to allow them to make informed choices about what to do next.
- i) Offer support to the tenant where appropriate to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- j) Ensure that where children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too have access to services as early as possible.
- k) Consider the use of civil laws to offer maximum protection to all victims to stop the abuse reoccurring.

- l) Follow the relevant child protection procedures if Paragon believes a child is at risk due to domestic abuse
- m) In support of the implementation of this policy Paragon will ensure that, fully gender inclusive, domestic abuse training available for all frontline staff.
- n) Not tolerate domestic abuse from our employees.
- o) Publicise our approach, both in print and digitally, to raise awareness both internally and
- p) externally with the aim of increasing the reporting of domestic abuse.

## Paragon's Approach

### Responding to a Report of Domestic Abuse

On receiving a report of domestic abuse directly from a tenant, if it's safe to do so a face to face meeting with the named tenant will be offered within 24 hours (same-sex meetings will be facilitated where requested). Where this is not possible due to the weekend, or a bank holiday, the person will be referred to a relevant support agency or a meeting will be arranged on the next available working day. Where requested by the tenant a discussion will be carried out over the telephone.

Where a report of domestic abuse is received via a professional third party e.g. a police officer we will seek to acquire all relevant shareable information, establish what support is in place and what is required from us. Where required we will then contact the tenant directly and offer a meeting with them as above. All meetings will be recorded using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based violence Safe Lives Risk Identification Checklist (DASH) the checklist can be found at [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk) and this will act as extra guidance to officers.

We hold up to date contact details for a range of support agencies, including those that support LGBT+ individuals, men, the elderly, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities and will ensure that these are reviewed on a regular basis.

### Carrying Out Initial Discussion with a Tenant / Good Practice Guidelines

1. Confidentiality is paramount unless there are concerns about a child, young person or vulnerable adult – this must be explained to tenants in terms of safeguarding.
2. A tenant experiencing domestic abuse will often expect to receive a negative response to their situation – don't make assumptions about them whatever their age, sex, gender identity or any other attribute.

3. Listen, believe, reassure and take what is said seriously
4. Provide information about options but never make choices for people – they will know the level of danger better than you and need to make their own informed decisions.
5. Use non-judgemental, open questions.
6. Obtain permission to share information or approach other agencies unless there are concerns in relation to a child's safety. In which case you must explain why you are required to share information.
7. Establish safe contact telephone numbers/addresses and any unsafe times to make contact..
8. Never give out details to anyone else without the tenant's permission.
9. Never act as a go-between, between anyone experiencing domestic abuse and the alleged perpetrator.
10. Always allow time for the tenant to talk and express their feelings.

Face to face meetings will be carried out in a sensitive and supportive manner and immediate housing options and tenancy rights will be discussed. Contact with the police will be discussed.

At the end of the meeting, the Officer should agree with the tenant what action will be taken. The tenant will then be written to (or contacted by other preferred means) within five days with the agreed action plan. The Officer will ensure that contact is maintained with the tenant until they feel that support is no longer necessary.

It is the Association's intention to train staff to enable them to complete A Safe Lives Risk Identification Checklist (DASH). In the meantime where appropriate referral will be made to a support agency for completion of the checklist. A referral to MARAC can then made if the threshold is met Advice or support available (Domestic Violence, Women's Aid, AMIS, Citizens Advice Bureau etc) will be given.

Further contact with the tenant may need to include discussion on issues such as:

- Contacting the police if not already done so
- Longer term housing options
- Advice on welfare benefits
- Legal action to be taken against the alleged perpetrator
- Re-housing options
- Additional security for the home
- Referral to Domestic Violence support Services
- Advice on how to self-refer to for Domestic Violence Support
- A referral to social work services when there is a child in the household

Where possible, Paragon will assist and support a tenant to enable them to remain in their home. (This could include a referral to suitable local agency). In some cases however, the tenant may feel unable to return to their home, either in the immediate or longer term - for example if the alleged perpetrator of the domestic abuse remains in the property or in the locality of the property.

Paragon will aim to provide appropriate support to tenants of domestic abuse by ensuring that contact is maintained and with the permission of the tenant by ensuring that they are referred to other specialist agencies that can provide support.

### Tenancies

If the tenant experiencing domestic abuse is named on the tenancy agreement, they may be able to transfer the tenancy agreement solely into their name.

This will depend on:

- the legal status of the relationship
- whose name is on the tenancy agreement

If the tenant is married or has a registered civil partnership, the partner will have a right to live with the tenant within the family home, even if their name is not on the tenancy agreement. They will need to apply to the court for an exclusion order to suspend their rights to live in your home. The court will grant an exclusion order when it can be shown that it is necessary for a tenants own protection or the protection of their children.

As part of a tenancy agreement tenants, those living with a tenant and any visitors to a property must not harass or assault any person in the house or neighbourhood for any reason.

Paragon will consider arranging and paying for additional security of a property in order that a tenant of domestic abuse feels safe to return. This may include items such as lock changes or additional door or window locks. The Housing Manager will approve such measures subject to budget considerations.

Where the police wish to install additional security permission will be given immediately subject to agreement on who will maintain such items.

In cases where the property has allegedly been damaged by a perpetrator of domestic abuse, repairs will be carried out by the organisation in line with the relevant policy. Although a crime reference number is usually required, in exceptional circumstances, the appropriate Officer has the authority to waive this condition.

Any damage should be photographed and noted and a recharge raised against the alleged perpetrator. Where appropriate, Paragon may seek to take direct action against the alleged perpetrator and report the damage to the police as a crime.

### Multi-Agency Approach

Paragon acknowledges that tackling issues of Domestic Abuse requires a multi-agency approach and will endeavour to work with any useful local agencies in individual cases to ensure cases are dealt with in the most effective and efficient way.

Paragon will actively try to engage in good practice when dealing with Domestic Abuse, such as making referrals to MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) and following any recommendations or action plans that may arise from them.

### Victim Responsibilities

Paragon will provide support and assistance to victims as described in this policy. The organisation acknowledges that tenants who have experienced domestic abuse are often coerced, frightened and bullied into going back with the perpetrator. Therefore looking at the impact sometimes means that they are lacking self-esteem and self-confidence, it is not normally an event but a process of leaving. With this in mind tenants are responsible for working with the organisation and support agencies to make the support work. Where tenants fail to engage and show no signs of a willingness to engage, and where the behaviour is having an impact on neighbours, Paragon may consider addressing the behaviour under our Anti-social Behaviour Policy.

### Confidentiality/GPDR

Paragon recognises that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive, private incidents for tenants to report and will ensure total confidentiality on any cases that are reported.

Paragon may however share relevant information with local agencies such as the Police Scotland or Social Work Services. This will mean that cases are dealt with more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the alleged perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the tenant and/or their dependants to provide better or more effective support.

### Equalities

The Association will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our tenants. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion / faith, sex, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity policy.

When applying this policy we will:

- act with respect and consider the diverse needs of individual and communities
- take positive action to reduce any discrimination and harassment in local communities



## Complaints or Appeals

Any complaints about failure to follow this policy or about the way a tenant has been treated in relation to this policy will be dealt with by Paragon's complaints procedure. The procedure can be used by anyone who receives a service from Paragon and is affected by a decision or action taken by us, or anyone who represents such a person.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Cases of domestic abuse will be reviewed on a three monthly basis by the Housing Manager.

Cases will be logged by individual officers on QL contact management and monitored.

The policy will be reviewed 2024/25 or in the event of any significant changes

## Appendix 1 : Directory of Services

A directory of services is being developed detailing agencies who offer support and accommodation in relation to domestic abuse and this can be found at Appendix B.



Our homes, our people,  
our problem.

We've signed the **Make a Stand** pledge  
to support people experiencing  
domestic abuse, have you?

women's aid  
until women & children are safe



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing



#makeastand  
[cih.org/makeastand](http://cih.org/makeastand)

## COMMITTED TO ENDING ABUSE

CEA (Committed to Ending Abuse)  
21 Wellside Place  
Falkirk  
FK1 5RL  
Phone: 01324 635661  
Email: [info@cea.uk.com](mailto:info@cea.uk.com)  
Web Site : [www.cea.uk.com](http://www.cea.uk.com)

Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Will open outwith these hours by arrangement

Provide support and advice to anyone  
regardless of age, beliefs, ethnicity, faith,  
gender, sexual orientation and race

Self Referral, you can phone to make an  
appointment, text, call or simply drop in

## STIRLING & DISTRICT WOMEN'S AID

Stirling and District Women's Aid  
Unit 7  
Stirling Arcade  
Stirling  
FK8 1AX  
  
Office: 01786 469518  
Advice Line: 01786 470897  
E mail: [info@stirlingwomensaid.co.uk](mailto:info@stirlingwomensaid.co.uk)  
Web Site: [www.stirlingwomensaid.co.uk/](http://www.stirlingwomensaid.co.uk/)

Drop in service

Mon to Fri 10.00am – 3.00pm

24hr National Helpline 0800 027 1234

## CLACKMANNANSHIRE WOMEN'S AID

Clackmannanshire Women's Aid  
Greenfield Lodge, Parkway, Alloa, FK10 2AS  
Telephone: 01259 721407  
Email: [info@clackswomensaid.org.uk](mailto:info@clackswomensaid.org.uk)  
Web Site: [www.clackswomensaid.org.uk](http://www.clackswomensaid.org.uk)

Opening hours  
Monday 12.30pm – 4.00pm  
Tuesday – Friday 9.30am – 4.00pm  
Saturday 9.30am – 11.30am

Phone, call in to the office or email

Face to face support by appointment only



Our homes, our people,  
our problem.

We've signed the **Make a Stand** pledge  
to support people experiencing  
domestic abuse, have you?

women's aid  
until women & children are safe



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing



#makeastand  
[cih.org/makeastand](https://cih.org/makeastand)

## MEN'S ADVICE LINE

### Men's Advice Line:

Help for Male Victims of Domestic  
Violence

Help Line: 0808 801 0327 (free from  
landlines and most mobiles)

Email: [info@mensadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadvice.org.uk)

Website: [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

Website: [respectphoneline.org.uk](http://respectphoneline.org.uk)

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential  
helpline offering support, information  
and practical advice to male victims of  
domestic violence.

Open: Monday - Friday 10am – 8pm

Work with men & women who want to  
stop using abusive behaviour in  
relationships.

Also Signpost people to behavioural  
change programmes.

## AMIS (ABUSED MEN IN SCOTLAND)

### AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland)

Phone: 03300 949 395

Email: [support@amis.org.uk](mailto:support@amis.org.uk)

Website: [abusedmeninscotland.org](http://abusedmeninscotland.org)

Supports men who are experiencing or  
have experienced domestic abuse. Call  
the confidential helpline (it's free to call  
from landlines and most UK mobiles,  
and doesn't appear on itemised phone  
bills). Can also offer support via email