



**Muirhouse  
Housing  
Association**

## **MUIRHOUSE HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

<b>Title of Policy:</b>	Domestic Abuse Support
<b>Date of Adoption or Last Review:</b>	23 September 2019
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Stevie McAvoy, Chief Executive
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	September 2022
<b>Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management</b>	<p><b>Standard 5</b> The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.</p> <p><b>Guidance</b> 5.2 The RSL upholds and promotes the standards of behaviour and conduct it expects of governing body members and staff through an appropriate code of conduct. It manages governing body members' performance, ensures compliance and has a robust system to deal with any breach of the code.</p> <p>5.3 The RSL pays due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and human rights, and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements.</p>

## **Introduction**

Muirhouse Housing Association (“MHA”, “we”) has developed this policy as part of our commitment to support employees' health and wellbeing at work. It covers the internal and external support available to employees experiencing domestic abuse or the threat of domestic abuse, including the appointment of an employee as a nominated point of contact, special leave provisions and signposting to external sources of advice and help.

Domestic abuse reduces an employee's ability to work and has an economic and attendance impact far beyond any sickness absence resulting directly from injuries received during abuse. These indirect costs include time off work talking to lawyers and medical professionals, poor productivity and reduced promotion prospects for the individual as a result of working below his/her potential. Individuals may even lose employment as a result of poor attendance or work performance, or as a result of the need to move to a different area to escape an abuser. Costs to the employer arise from lower productivity due to poor concentration on the part of abused employees, and the possibility of business disruption if a violent partner presents at the workplace.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support employees experiencing domestic abuse;
- enable employees experiencing domestic abuse to remain productive and at work;
- aid managers seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse;
- assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse; and
- reinforce organisational culture by demonstrating that MHA values, and is prepared to support, staff during difficult periods.

## **Scope**

Research shows that women are much more likely to suffer more serious injury and ongoing assaults than men. One in four women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. This means it is likely that all workplaces will have staff that have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse as well as those who are perpetrators of abuse. However, it should be acknowledged that men can experience domestic abuse from their female partner and that domestic abuse also occurs in same-sex relationships. This policy applies equally to all MHA employees regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

## **Definition**

Domestic abuse is defined as any incident of violence, abuse or threatening behaviour between adults who are, or who have been, intimate partners or family members and can take many different forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and financial abuse.

## **Internal support**

In order to support employees who experience domestic abuse, MHA will:

- nominate an appointed person in the workplace as a confidential first point of contact for those experiencing domestic abuse;
- offer employees experiencing domestic abuse access to counselling, and publicise the availability of this support regularly through notice boards, emails and ongoing health and wellbeing initiatives;
- offer access to counselling and other support to employees perpetrating domestic abuse who seek help from the employer; and
- undertake to raise workplace awareness of domestic abuse issues through a programme of regular information initiatives.

## **External support**

We will signpost external sources of help and support for employees and managers, including information on:

- “the Corporate Alliance against Domestic Violence”, which provides background information for managers and professionals on the workplace implications of domestic abuse;
- “Scottish Women’s Aid”, which provides free, confidential helpline service 24 hours a day;
- “Respect”, an organisation which provides practical information and advice on domestic abuse for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends; and

- “the National Domestic Violence Helpline”, which provides advice for those experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Line managers' role**

Line managers have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help. MHA will provide training for all managers in handling sensitive issues (including domestic abuse), raising awareness of domestic abuse in teams, and operating the procedures for handling instances of domestic abuse.

The role of the line manager is to:

- identify employees experiencing difficulties as a result of domestic abuse (for example, using regular performance appraisals, or by fostering an open management culture that enables team members to disclose sensitive issues);
- provide support in the first instance, including specific advice on the options available, but also recognise the limitations of his/her role (managers are not professional counsellors or experts);
- protect confidentiality in all instances (excepting the requirements of child protection);
- refer the individual to the appropriate internal or external source of help and support, for example MHA’s confidential point of contact or external agency;
- ensure that the safety of all employees in the team is protected; and
- enable the affected employee to remain productive and at work during a difficult period in his/her domestic life, for example by using our special leave policies and procedures.

### **Attendance**

We recognise that a member of staff experiencing domestic abuse may need to be absent from work at times and will assist them by using our special leave procedures.

Individual absences can be discussed and agreed between the employee and the line manager, with HR support where appropriate.

It will have no adverse effect on an employee’s absence records where the absence is related to domestic abuse.

## **Security and safety**

MHA will protect the safety and security of all employees at work, including those affected by domestic abuse and their colleagues.

Employees need to disclose that they are at risk from domestic abuse in order to receive this protection and we will seek to enable employees to disclose such facts by generating a supportive and open management culture.

## **Data Protection**

When an individual experiences domestic abuse and MHA is providing support, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required due to changes to legislation.