



Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Policy

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Responsible Officer: Head of Housing & Customer Services

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Providing homes, supporting communities

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1.0 Hjaltland Values

Our Vision

Providing homes, supporting communities

Our Values

Teamwork

Working together as one team, to the benefit of our customers. To demonstrate and extend trust in each other.

Open, Honest & Inclusive

We offer a people focused service that is centred in fairness and integrity. We believe in being open, honest and respectful in everything we do.

Ownership

We expect our staff to take responsibility for their actions and give them the freedom to do their job in a positive working environment.

Quality

We value quality in everything we do from the standard of our product to the level of service we provide. We take pride in making a difference in communities and providing continuous improvement.

Innovation

We seek to ensure we have sustainable housing, fit for future generations, maintained and developed to the highest possible standard.

2.0 Introduction

This policy has been established to ensure consistency of all Hjaltland Housing Association activities.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Hjaltland Housing Association standards with regards to Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence. The Association also has a separate *Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy* to ensure employees have access to support where required.

Each employee is an important contributor to the Hjaltland Housing Association vision and each employee is needed at work to assist in the accomplishment of Hjaltland Housing Association's values.

To ensure effective and efficient operations of the Hjaltland Housing Association and provide the best possible work environment to employees, Hjaltland Housing Association expects employees to adhere to the standards as outlined in this policy.

This policy forms part of our commitment to the Make a Stand pledge which has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance and has been created to encourage housing organisations across the UK to make a commitment to supporting people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, domestic abuse.

This policy sets out how Hjaltland Housing Association will take steps to assist and support any person experiencing or being threatened with domestic abuse, whilst also supporting victims of sexual assault. The policy applies to all customers, including those living with our tenants.

Domestic abuse is still a largely hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.

As a housing provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is essential that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the victim/survivor to offer support.

In addition, we will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.

Hjaltland Housing Association participates as a partner agency in the Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership (SDAP) and is an active member and co-chair of the Shetland MARAC forum (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). The Association is represented by the Head of Housing and Customer Service, with the Senior Housing Officer deputising where required.

The principles of this policy will also be applied to offer support and guidance to applicants and tenants who have been victims of sexual violence.

This policy has been written in line with 'Domestic abuse; a good practice guide for social landlords'. Shetland Women's Aid, The Compass Centre (formerly known as Shetland Rape Crisis) and members of the Hjaltland Housing Association Tenant Focus Group have also contributed to, and approved, this policy.

3.0 Policy Statement

Hjaltland Housing Association and our employees recognise the legal obligations placed on them by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 and of any other statutory provisions and regulations applying to its activities, and aims to:

- Enable people to fulfil their aspirations; we will promote the welfare of all victims/survivors who come into contact with the Association.
- Create a safe environment where victims/survivors feel they can approach us and are listened to so enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and live more safely.
- Provide timely and effective guidance by working in partnership with strategic partners, such as Police Scotland, Shetland Women's Aid, The Compass Centre and Shetland Islands Council to respond to any cases of abuse that may arise or be brought to our attention.
- Provide our employees with clear and practical guidance to ensure we support and protect victims/survivors, providing more information about their available choices so they can be empowered to fulfil their ambition.
- Work in partnership with Police Scotland, Victim Support, and Shetland Island Council to offer support by way of signposting to perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour.
- We will liaise with appropriate agencies to provide safety and support measures where necessary to witnesses.

Employees [and any sub-contractors] have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy by fulfilling the responsibilities placed upon them.

Signed

Ian Bray
Head of Housing & Customer Services

Date: [FULLDATESIGNED] Planned Review Date: [FULLDATEPLANNED]

4.0 Regulatory Framework / Legal

The Regulatory Framework is based on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, along with the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 & Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

Hjaltland Housing Association has a range of duties, obligations and responsibilities placed on them by legislation and through statutory guidance. These include achieving the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, duties to help people who are homeless, duties around the safety of tenants' homes, and promoting equality and human rights.

Hjaltland Housing Association also has requirements placed on it by other regulatory bodies, including the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Care Inspectorate, Audit Scotland and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Hjaltland Housing Association will ensure that we meet all of our legal duties and responsibilities and that we adhere to relevant guidance and the requirements of other regulators.

Relevant Regulatory Standard: [No]

[RELEVANT LEGAL REGISTER & APPLICATION]

5.0 Responsibilities

5.1 Committee

It is recognised that the Management Committee, while not actively involved in the day to day running of the organisation, is collectively responsible for providing leadership and direction.

Committee Members are responsible for ensuring that Hjaltland Housing Association fulfils its statutory obligations and allocates adequate resources to do so.

5.2 Executive Team

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the Committee's policy objectives are achieved and that policy and performance are kept under active review to address any changes required. The following individual post has been allocated overall responsibility within the terms of our policy:

- Bryan Leask, Chief Executive Officer

5.3 Senior Leadership Team

Due to the 'managerial' function performed by Heads of Departments it is accepted that they will be best placed to identify and control any concerns within their departments. Day to day responsibility for ensuring the policy is put into practice and consultation with employees is delegated to:

- Heads of Departments

They will ensure:

- The objectives and guidance outlined within our management system is fully understood and observed by persons under their control;
- Responsibilities are clearly defined and allocated / delegated to the appropriate levels within their areas of responsibility;
- The policy statement will be brought to the attention of all employees under their control;
- Any changes to the policy or our arrangements are brought to the attention of all persons under their control;

5.4 Responsible Persons

It is important that policy standards are maintained and improved therefore where necessary specific roles within Hjaltland Housing Association, have been allocated additional responsibilities. Where this responsibility is specific to a subject area, the details of the responsible person are communicated to employees in writing or verbally as required.

These Responsible Persons will also be required to monitor their areas of control as well as the performance and activities of all persons under their control to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained.

Relevant responsible persons are:

- Head of Housing & Customer Services

5.5 All Staff

- Employees will comply with the policies, procedures and arrangements set out in the Management System together with any information, instruction and training provided. In addition, any risk control measures and equipment provided to ensure safe-working practices will be properly used.
- Employees will report to their Head of Department or other member of management any identified breaches of procedures, any accidents or incidents in any aspect, which appears to them to give rise to a significant risk to employees or other persons. Such reports will be made without undue delay.
- Employees will inform their Head of Department or other member of management, without undue delay, where they believe that further training or other risk control measures would be beneficial.
- Employees will co-operate in all programmes, training, assessments and other initiatives that are intended to reduce risk and will actively implement any control measures identified as being required.

- Employees will not participate in horseplay, practical jokes or other acts, which may result in harm being caused to themselves or to other individuals.
- Demonstrate their commitment by their behaviour and co-operate in the investigation of accidents and incidents;

6.0 Definitions

Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. Domestic abuse is overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men but can affect anyone. It doesn't matter how old someone is, what race or ethnicity they are, what class they are, whether or not they are disabled, or whether they have children – anyone can be a victim of abuse.

For many people who live with domestic abuse there will be no scars, bruises or broken bones, but for some it can take their life. No one kind of abuse is more serious than any other.

The Scottish Government provides a clear definition of Domestic abuse, which will be adopted for the purposes of the policy;

'Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends).

The Compass Centre provides a clear definition of Sexual Violence, which will be adopted for the purposes of the policy;

'Sexual violence is any form of sexual contact that you don't freely agree to.

Contact includes more than just physical touch, it can also include any kind of sexual or sexualised interaction that you don't want or agree to. This may include unwanted messages and online harassment, stalking, inappropriate sexual questions in the workplace and much more. It also includes physical contact such as sexual assault and rape.

You may hear different words for sexual violence such as rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or street harassment. Other forms of sexual violence include stalking, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and organised and ritual abuse.'

7.0 Policy Framework

Prevention of abuse

We will work in collaboration with partner agencies, as a member of the Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership, to;

‘Raise public and professional awareness of, and challenges attitudes towards, gender-based violence and its consequences on an ongoing basis through a local communications plan, a staff training plan and development of organisational GBV policies.’ Shetland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2023.

We will also publicise this policy to all tenants and employees and provide detailed advice on where support is available (Appendix Two).

Housing Options

Anyone approaching our service for help will be provided with a safe, confidential space to discuss their situation, where staff will take a non-judgmental approach to support and promote the safety and welfare of the applicant. We will adopt a person-centred approach to the individual circumstances, and offer tailored advice accordingly. No two situations will be the same, but staff will have training and knowledge on all housing options available, including appropriate referrals. We acknowledge and recognise risk can be heightened at the point of separation.

We can support tenants to remain in their home, should they wish to do so. Appropriate referrals and signposting will identify potential options such as interdicts and non-harassment orders. Tenants of the Association can have additional security measures installed as part of the Safe at Home Protocol (Appendix One).

We recognise that remaining in the home is often the preferred outcome, and this may minimise the impact on the individual and other family members. However, in scenarios where an applicant does wish to move, we will provide support through our Allocation Policy.

Survivors may be eligible for the following points in line with our Allocation Policy;

- Social Needs
- Sharing Amenities (where applicable)
- Insecurity of Tenure (even if a tenant or owner-occupier, an applicant can present as homeless and therefore should have points to reflect this)
- Over-crowding (where applicable)
- Medical – where the situation is having a detrimental effect on physical or mental health

In line with best practice recommendations, applicants who are applying to move due to domestic abuse or sexual violence will not be suspended from an offer of accommodation where there are current or former rent arrears.

Perpetrators

When we are approached by a perpetrator (someone who discloses through the course of an appointment), we will provide them with appropriate housing advice with a view to them leaving the current accommodation. We will also refer to appropriate agencies in terms of rehabilitation programmes (www.respectphonenumber.org.uk).

Where the perpetrator is a tenant, we will consider the powers available to us in line with Housing legislation, with a view to transferring a tenancy, removing a joint tenant or seeking eviction. This will be done on a case by case basis, in line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

Sensitive Allocations

Sensitive Allocations are used when it is necessary to deviate from our Allocations Policy. Instead of automatically allocating a property to the applicant with the highest housing need, as defined by our Allocation Policy, we will consider the suitability of the applicant for the property. This will be based on information we have about the applicant and on our knowledge of the property, its location and its neighbours.

We only use sensitive allocations in exceptional circumstances, and will make sure all decisions are accountable, transparent and monitored. We may use our discretion when identifying sensitive applicants or properties.

Homelessness

Whilst we will look to prevent homelessness through Housing Options, should an applicant wish to pursue this option, we will help facilitate a homeless presentation with the Local Authority. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation, and we will also liaise with Shetland Women's Aid, who have limited refuge accommodation.

Confidentiality

A disclosure is extremely sensitive, and we will therefore ensure interviews are conducted in an appropriate setting. Where requested, we will send correspondence to an alternative address, and ensure a preferred method of contact is noted on our housing management system.

We will not share a disclosure without consent, but we will encourage victims/survivors to report incidents to other agencies, such as the Police and Women's Aid, as this will broaden their options of support in terms of civil and criminal action.

The exception to confidentiality will be where we have a duty to report concerns regarding child protection or a vulnerable adult in line with our Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult policy.

Support

Partnership working with specialist agencies, such as Shetland Women's Aid and Shetland Rape Crisis, will be a key element in providing the support required by victims/survivors. Whilst risk may be heightened at the point of separation, we will continue to provide longer term support to both tenants and applicants, as required.

Training

All employees will have knowledge of this policy, and those who may provide support to applicants or tenants will undergo additional training coordinated by Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership. Furthermore, front-line staff will be familiar with the SafeLives Dash risk checklist, which can be used to assess the level of risk, and can be used to refer applicants to the MARAC process.

The Head of Housing & Customer Services and the Senior Housing Officer will act as organisation representatives on multi-agency forums, and will strengthen relations with specialist agencies, such as Shetland Women's Aid and The Compass Centre. They will also promote Domestic Abuse initiatives on The Association's social media networks and ensure up to date leaflets and information is available within the office.

8.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Right Impact Assessment

The Association is committed to promoting positive measures that eliminate all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Our aim as landlord, service provider and employer is to recognise the needs of all individuals, and ensure these commitments are evident throughout every aspect of our business and our activities.

Hjaltland Housing Association is committed to providing fair and equal treatment to all in accordance with our Equality & Diversity Policy. Additionally, an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to ensure this policy is compliant.

In the context of dealing with reports or disclosures of domestic abuse or sexual violence, we will aim to:

- Meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds and take into consideration gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
- Ensure our service is responsive to the needs of our existing and prospective customers
- Understand the cultural implications and barriers to reporting domestic abuse
- Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our service.

Upon request this policy can be made available free of charge, in a variety of formats including; large print, audio, Braille, and community languages.

The Association assesses and reviews all new and revised policies and procedures, and an Impact Assessment is available.

9.0 GDPR

The Association will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Hjaltland Housing Associations Privacy notices.

10.0 Monitoring and Review

Employees [and any sub-contractors] have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this policy by fulfilling the responsibilities placed upon them.

As stated, the operations of the company and this policy will be reviewed at regular intervals or in light of changing company circumstances, procedures and statutes. These changes will be brought to the attention of employees and others whose health and safety may be affected by such changes.

Planned Review Date: September 2026

Appendix One - Shetland Safe at Home Protocol

Shetland Domestic Abuse Partnership (SDAP) partners are committed to raising awareness of issues regarding gender-based violence and domestic abuse, whilst providing practical and emotional support to victims. Although this protocol will focus on solutions to allow individuals to remain in the home, victims/survivors will also be advised of alternative housing solutions where it would not be reasonable to continue to occupy their current accommodation.

1. Protocol Aims

The aim of this Protocol is to identify those at risk of Domestic Abuse through a multi-agency referral, where small, practical adaptations within the home can enable victims to remain in a safe and familiar environment. The scope within this policy will also apply to Association tenants who have been the victim of sexual violence, where measures would increase safety.

The safety measures identified through this Protocol are intended as an early intervention to minimise risk and as such, not all cases will be subject to discussion at MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

2. Referrals

Referrals can be made by Police Scotland, Shetland Women's Aid or Victim Support, and should be forwarded on to the relevant landlord. A referral may also be identified as an action point following a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

If the situation is assessed as high risk, there may be an action from a MARAC case conference for a full property survey to be completed by a Police Scotland Officer. Where recommendations are over and above the agreed scope of works detailed within this policy, the situation will be assessed and discussed by the MARAC chair, the Police and the relevant landlord.

The referral will provide sufficient information to support the request to fit additional security measures.

The referral will provide specific details of what additional security measures are required to support the individual to remain in their own home.

The form will be sent by email to the appropriate housing representative and followed up by a telephone call.

3. Scope

The most appropriate partner agency will undertake a Safe at Home assessment of the housing circumstances of the individual with a view to her/him being able to remain in their own home. The assessment will apply to the security of the property and a minimum standard of measures that could be achievable. Shetland Islands Council & Hjaltland Housing Association will fund, and complete, the following adaptations, as appropriate following a referral, within their respective properties;

- Window locks
- Security chains
- Peep holes
- Lock changes
- Removal of glass panels from external doors
- Slip bolts
- Repairs to broken windows or doors due to Domestic Abuse.

If the property is privately rented or owned/jointly owned, the recommendations should be relayed to the individual. Support should be offered, as required, to engage a contractor to complete the works. Where the individual is not in a financial position to complete the alterations, support should be provided to source external funding – this may include accessing the Welfare Crisis Fund.

If a full home security survey is undertaken and recommendations arise that are not included in the list above, they will be discussed between the MARAC Chair, the relevant housing provider and the Police. The decision reached will be recorded as an incident update on the Police system, and will be recorded within MARAC minutes (if a MARAC case).

4. Feedback

It will be the responsibility of the housing provider to ensure that the referrer is informed of:

- Whether the safety measures have been agreed
- If the safety measures have not been agreed, the rationale for this
- The timescale for the safety measure to be completed based on the risk identified
- Confirmation when work has been completed
- Feedback to local MARAC if relevant.

5. Funding

Requested security measures will be funded as follows:

- SIC tenants – SIC Housing Service
- HHA tenants – HHA
- Owner occupiers – own finance or external funding
- Private rented tenants – own finance or external funding

Appendix 2: Support Agencies – Local and National

Emergency Services

POLICE

In an Emergency Dial 999

Tel: 101 – Nonemergency calls

Local Services

Shetland Women's Aid

Shetland Women's Aid provide specialist support to women, children, and young people subjected to domestic abuse. They may be able to offer safe and secure accommodation for you and your children.

Tel: 01595 692 070

The Compass Centre

Tel: 01595 745 078/
07570 062 362

The Compass Centre provides free and confidential information, advocacy and support to anyone in Shetland aged 13 and over affected by any form of sexual violence.

Victim Support Shetland

Tel: 01595 724 524

Victim Support Shetland provides victims of crime with free, confidential emotional and practical assistance and information about the criminal justice system.

Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, Information and Resources Tel: 07747 097 160

If your life is affected by sexual abuse there are support groups for survivors over 18, partners of survivors and parents of children who have been sexually abused by others.

Shetland Citizens Advice Bureau

Shetland Citizens Advice Bureau provides free and



Tel: 01595 694 696

confidential advice and information whatever your problem.

Advocacy Shetland

Tel: 01595 743 929

Advocacy Shetland helps people to gain access to information, explore and understand their options, and make their views and wishes known to all the services they are dealing with.

Shetland Islands Council:

Social Work services are there to provide help for adults and children who are at risk of harm.

Duty Social Work

Tel: 01595 695 611 Out of Hours

Tel: 01595 744 400 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

National Support Services

24hr Domestic Abuse and Forced

Free confidential 24 hour support for people who have experienced domestic abuse

Marriage Helpline

Tel: 0800 027 1234

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

6pm – Midnight

Tel: 08088 01 03 02

Mini-com 0141 353 3091 deaf/hard of hearing

Crisis support for anyone in Scotland affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives

**Rape and Sexual Abuse Service
Highland (RASHASH)**

RASHASH provides free and confidential information, advocacy and support to anyone aged 13 or over that is affected by sexual violence

Mon/Wed/Fri 9.30am -1.00pm

Tues/Thurs 1pm – 4.30pm

Tel: 03330 066 909

Respect Phone line

Mon – Friday 9am – 5pm

Tel: 0808 802 4040

Offers a chance to get support to stop and change to anyone who is worried that their behaviour towards a partner is abusive.

Can also support concerned families and friends.

**Scottish Legal Aid Board
Legal Help Information Line**

Helps individuals on low and modest incomes gain access to the legal system. Provides help towards the cost of legal advice and representation, for those who qualify, paid for out of public funds.

Civil Legal Aid Assistance

(Highland & Islands)

Employs solicitors to provide civil legal assistance direct to clients and address unmet legal need under Part V of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986.

Tel: 0845 123 2353 / 01463 641 77

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Provides free legal information and advice to women who have been affected by any form of Gender Based Violence

Tues 6-9pm; Wed 1.30-4.30pm;
Fri 10am – 1pm
Tel: 08088 010 789

Support Services for Men

Men's Advice Line

Mon-Friday 9am – 5pm
Tel: 0808 801 0327

Confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic abuse

Abused Men in Scotland

Mon – Friday 9am – 4pm
Tel: 0808 800 0024

Provides direct support to men experiencing domestic abuse in Scotland, as well as helping to improve mainstream service responses.

Survivors UK

SMS Chat Mon-Fri 10.30– 9pm

Sat 10am – 6pm

Text: 020 3322 1860
WhatsApp: 0791 816 064

Survivors UK offer web and SMS chat services for men provided by trained professionals who are specialists in the field of male sexual violence, including childhood sexual abuse and adult rape.

Respect

Tel: 01595 724524

Offers a chance to get support to stop and change to anyone who is worried that their behaviour towards a partner is abusive. Can also support concerned families and friends.

Support Services for Children and Young People

ChildLine

ChildLine is a free, private and confidential service where

Tel: 0800 11 11

you can be you. Whatever your worry, whenever you need help, however you want to get in touch. They are there for children online or on the phone, anytime.

LGBT Youth Scotland

Text to chat: 07786 202 370

LGBT Youth Scotland's website provides information on identifying domestic abuse and what to do in a crisis
LGBT Youth Scotland is the largest young and community-based organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland.

18U

18U provides information and support to young people who have been abused in any way.

Text/WhatsApp: 07707 531 976

LGBT+ Support Services

Galop

Provides emotional and practical support for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse.

Mon/Thurs 10am – 8pm; Tues*/

Wed 10am – 5pm

Fri 1pm – 5pm

*Tues 1pm – 5pm is trans-specific
Service

Tel: 0800 999 5428

LGBT Youth Scotland

Text to chat: 07786 202 370

LGBT Youth Scotland's website provides information on identifying domestic abuse and what to do in a crisis
LGBT Youth Scotland is the largest young and community-based organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland.