



What you need to know about the guidance on domestic abuse

Background

Every year in Scotland, there are around 60,000 victims of domestic abuse and on average, between one in three and one in five women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Relationship breakdown remains the single biggest cause of homelessness for women in Scotland.

As part of the Make a Stand campaign we asked all social landlords to develop a domestic abuse policy. To support landlords ALACHO, CIH, SFHA, Scottish Women's Aid and Shelter Scotland have produced [voluntary guidance](#) for the sector.

Why is this needed

Landlords have told us that they want to do the right thing but that they need support to offer a good response to those affected by domestic abuse. Otherwise victims may be asked to leave their home time and again and, at times, made homeless by the very services that are meant to support them.

Barriers to an effective response:

- Simplistic thinking and default response of pushing victims into homelessness.
- Concerns about making matters worse.
- Staff not confident about getting involved.
- Not recognising domestic abuse as a cause of women's homelessness.
- Not believing victims.
- Lack of knowledge and training.
- Too risk averse.

What is included in this guidance?

Checklist for good practice: The guidance includes a checklist for all landlords to develop good practice in responding to domestic abuse.

This includes:

- Having a policy in place that prevents homeless and addresses the needs of those experiencing abuse.
- Providing sensitive services to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of victims and

reducing the risk of further harm.

- Understanding the dynamic of domestic abuse and coercive control.
- Ensuring staff have clear procedures to follow and are trained appropriately.

Purpose of the guidance: The guidance is designed to support landlords to develop their own domestic abuse policy. It should help them:

- Respond effectively to tenants who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Support tenants who are victims of domestic abuse.
- Minimise disruption to such tenants and their children so they can maintain family and community connection, employment, education etc
- Hold tenants, who perpetrate domestic abuse, to account.
- Prevent domestic abuse from occurring/re-occurring.

The CIH view

The sector has a responsibility to do the right thing, but landlords need support to make sure that they're offering a good response.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) called for "clear policies on domestic abuse and ensuring that experience of abuse or violence does not lead to someone losing their tenancy".

However, to ensure that policy reflects reality we believe social landlords need the power to end a joint tenancy without making victims homeless and we are exploring whether new legislation is required to allow this.

In addition, there is a need for this voluntary guidance to be given statutory status. Otherwise landlords, by their own admission, might not be able to prioritise developing and embedding a domestic abuse policy while resources are under pressure.