Teachers Housing Association

POLICY TITLE:	DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY		
BUSINESS AREA:	HOUSING MANAGEMENT		
APPROVAL DATE:	March 2025		
APPROVED BY:	SMT		
VERSION:	1	**RENEWAL DATE:**	March 2028

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION	The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Neighbourhood and Community Standard Housing Acts 1985 and1996 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 Human Rights Act The Equality Act 2010 The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Policy
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	Anti-social Behaviour Policy Safeguarding Policy Allocations and Letting Policy
SCOPE	This Policy applies to residents of all general needs and supported housing properties.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 Teachers Housing Association (THA) recognises that domestic abuse can happen to anyone and is committed to supporting victims of domestic abuse however we can. By adopting a victim-centred approach, we aim to create a culture when those who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse feel supported to make a report.

1.2 We recognise the importance of providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for help. We will work collaboratively with external partners when managing reports of domestic abuse to enable victims to access the appropriate support and advice.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 THA does not tolerate domestic abuse in any of its properties. We believe everyone has the right to live free from domestic abuse and will take all reports seriously and work with other agencies to support victims.

2.2 Domestic abuse is defined as any incident (or pattern of incidents) of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, or violence between persons over the age of 16 years who are, or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include but is not limited to:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Economic abuse - any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services

2.3 Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources for personal gain, depriving them of their independence and ability to leave, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

2.4 Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten. It is where someone repeatedly or continuously engage in behaviour towards another person that has serious effects.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 There are many kinds of domestic abuse, including physical assault, wounding, sexual assault, threats to kill and harassment. While these are all criminal offences, domestic abuse is not always violent and can include verbal abuse and disrespect, emotional abuse, financial control and isolation from friends and family.

3.2 We will provide a safe environment for victims of domestic abuse to contact us and help them make informed decisions about their situation. We may receive a report of domestic abuse from the victim, a concerned neighbour or relative, or the police and will deal with all complaints sensitively and take our lead from the person making the report.

3.3 While domestic abuse is predominantly carried out by men against women, we recognise that men may also present as a victim and that it can occur in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender relationships. In each of these cases specialist support will be sought.

3.4 A number of victims of domestic abuse and their children will also require safeguarding and we will make safeguarding referrals as appropriate to make sure people are protected.

3.5 We may become aware of domestic abuse while investigating a report of anti-social behaviour. This can be through complaints relating to noise, a repeated number of repairs needed to be carried out or we may notice a change in behaviour of a tenant or household member. In such cases we may need more information and all such cases will be taken seriously and treated sympathetically and in confidence.

3.6 There are a range of measures we may take following a report of domestic abuse. These include:

- Help the victim to access appropriate services as early as possible and provide advice to allow them to make decisions about what to do next
- Work with other agencies to provide support
- Discuss housing options if the victim cannot remain in the home
- Support victims to use civil and criminal laws which can offer protection and help stop future abuse, including injunctions
- If there is a safeguarding concern, we may have to raise our concerns with the local authority
- Taking enforcement action against the perpetrator

3.7 We should offer to meet the person that is reported to be experiencing domestic abuse in a place they feel safe and with a member of staff they feel comfortable with. We should establish the name of the perpetrator and their relationship to them.

3.8 Victims will be encouraged to give us permission to share information with other agencies such as the Police and local authority departments. This is to allow criminal proceedings to be pursued in instances where the victim has consented to this. All information will be treated with the upmost confidence and will only be passed to other agencies where the victim has given their consent. There may be some exceptions to this, such as:

- Where we believe a child to be at risk
- There is a high risk of serious harm
- We have an obligation by law to disclose the information

3.9 Victims should be given practical advice on the options available depending on whether they need immediate protection. There are a number of national and local support agencies that will be able to provide help. They should always be advised to phone the Police on 999 if they feel in immediate danger.

3.10 Unless someone is in immediate danger, we should not advise them to leave their home as it may make matters worse. We should aways offer support and provide information and avoid making decisions for them. Local support can be found on the womensaid.org.uk page and general advice on how to get help can be found on the gov.uk page.

3.11 It is important to understand that some victims may not seek or respond to offers of help and we must respect this. Reason for not wanting help may include:

- Fear of the abuser
- Doubt that any action will be taken by the Police or the fear of pressure to purse a criminal case
- Lack of knowledge about what support services are available or how to access them
- Lack of resources, financial or otherwise
- Love, loyalty, attachment to their abuser and the hope they will change
- Feelings of shame or failure
- Pressure from family, children or friends
- Religious or cultural expectations
- Long term effects of abuse, such as self-neglect, depression, low self-esteem
- Alcohol and/or drug addition
- Anticipated impact on children, relatives and friends

3.12 Every case of domestic abuse will be assessed on its own circumstances, taking into account the wishes and needs of the victims, the severity of the abuse and any additional criminality.

3.13 We understand that decisions regarding domestic abuse are complex, requiring careful thought and planning. We will always base our support on the victims individual needs and take into account the views and ongoing safety of the individual and any children when considering the most appropriate course of action.

3.14 Where someone is experiencing abuse and are unable to remain in their home, we will ensure they are aware of the housing options available to them. This may be temporary / emergency accommodation while safety measures are put in place. This can be arranged through the refuge.org.uk page or the local authority. We will consider a permanent move if it is appropriate to do so.

3.15 We will work with other agencies to improve the safety and security of our properties where we are aware of incidents of domestic abuse. Extra security measures such as lock changes, door chains, security lights, and rechargeable repairs or a potential transfer will be considered on a case-by case basis and will be decided on the risks identified.

3.16 We may take tenancy enforcement action against perpetrators of domestic abuse where it is appropriate to do so and will not compromise the safety of the victim. In cases of intentional damage to a THA property we will provide a statement to the police to assist with any criminal proceedings.

3.17 If the perpetrator is the tenant we may take possession action against them and grant a tenancy to the victim. No-one should lose their security of tenure or home as a result of domestic violence and we should help the victim remain in their home if that is what they wish to do.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The Operations Director has overall responsibility for this Policy with all staff responsible for providing support and helping victims to feel safe in making a report of domestic abuse.

4.2 We will keep confidential and secure records and refer concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse, harm or neglect to the lead statutory agency responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquires. We will record all decisions made not to refer a concern, and the reason why.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 THA recognises that all adults and children, without exception, have the right to protection from harassment, harm or abuse. This Policy complies with the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure equality of treat for all without discrimination or prejudice.

6. PERFORMANCE CONTROLS AND BUSINESS RISK

6.1 Dealing with domestic abuse is a key responsibility for housing providers. THA are required to have a policy on how we recognise and respond to cases of domestic abuse.

6.2 We will keep confidential and secure records and refer concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse, harm or neglect to the lead statutory agency responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquires. We will record all decisions made not to refer a concern, and the reason why.

7. MONITORING

7.1 THA will review and monitor this Policy and our working arrangements regularly to ensure they remain effective in highlighting any barriers to reporting domestic abuse.

7.2 We will monitor the number of domestic abuse reports made and evaluate investigated cases and alerts and the lessons learnt. A report will be made available to the Board annually.

8. REVIEW

8.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier in response to regulatory or legislative changes.