

# Policy & Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 21 March 2023

## Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 To note the content of the City of Edinburgh Council Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy which has been updated in line with Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.
- 1.2 To approve updated Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy for use from 1 April 2023.

**Amanda Hatton**

Executive Director for Children, Education and Justice Services

Contact: Jon Ferrer, Head of Quality, Governance and Regulation and Depute Chief Social Work Officer

E-mail: [Jon.Ferrer@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Jon.Ferrer@edinburgh.gov.uk)

# Report

## Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 The Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy, attached as an Appendix, includes a definition of domestic abuse as per the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 and adopts a gendered analysis of domestic abuse as per the Equally Safe strategy. This is a significant update to the policy, which is revised for the first time since 2013.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 Domestic Abuse can affect people from all walks of life, and it can have lifelong detrimental impacts on them and their children.
- 3.2 Although men and boys are affected by domestic abuse, women and girls are disproportionately affected. People with protected characteristics are also affected in ways that both overlap and differ to how people without protected characteristics are impacted.
- 3.3 This is the first review of Edinburgh's Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy since 2013, when it first came into effect.
- 3.4 The attached revised policy includes additional information on the impacts of domestic abuse on groups with individual and intersecting protected characteristics and sets out the guiding principles for intervention. It also provides information on additional services and sources of support for individuals affected by domestic abuse and professionals supporting them.
- 3.5 The current review of the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy has been approved by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and an Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out and published on the [City of Edinburgh Council's website](#).

### 4. Main report

---

- 4.1 Edinburgh aspires to be a city where everyone is equally safe from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. This includes violence and abuse in the private sphere within the home.

- 4.2 Domestic abuse overwhelmingly affects women and girls, although men, boys, transgender and non-binary people, as well as people with individual, multiple and intersecting protected characteristics can also be affected.
- 4.3 The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 recognises that domestic abuse includes physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and financial abuse and coercive control. It further recognises that children are affected by domestic abuse in detrimental ways regardless of whether they are directly targeted, whether they are witnesses or whether they are forced to by the perpetrator to behave abusively towards the non-abusive parent.
- 4.4 The revised Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy aligns with a number of relevant policies and procedures within the Council, specifically the [Adult Protection Policy](#), the [Adult Protection Multi-Agency Guidelines](#), the [Adult Protection Procedure](#), the [Edinburgh Child Protection Procedures](#), the [Forced Marriage Policy](#) and the [Domestic Abuse Housing Policy](#).
- 4.5 The revised Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy intends to substitute the Council's current policy, which was implemented in 2013. Specifically, the proposed revised policy:
  - 4.5.1 Has been compiled by a wider range of stakeholders and partner organisations operating in Edinburgh since the expansion of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee's membership
  - 4.5.2 Includes the most up-to-date definition of gender-based abuse adopted by the Scottish Government in the Equally Safe Strategy
  - 4.5.3 Is aligned with recent developments in legislation, policy and practice
  - 4.5.4 Discusses the specific ways in which domestic abuse affects women, children, and people with specific and intersecting protected characteristics
  - 4.5.5 Embeds Equally Safe guiding principles for effective domestic abuse intervention
  - 4.5.6 Outlines roles and responsibilities for the monitoring of the policy and
  - 4.5.7 Provides a range of resources and information for support and legislative and policy context.

## 5. Next Steps

---

- 5.1 Following approval of the revised Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy by the Policy and Sustainability Committee, the policy will be publicised on the City of Edinburgh Council website.
- 5.2 The Policy will be further disseminated to the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee, the Edinburgh Adult Support and Protection Committee and the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee.
- 5.3 The new Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## 6. Financial impact

---

- 6.1 Following a completed Integrated Impact Assessment, no financial impacts were identified as a result of the revision of this policy.

## 7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

---

- 7.1 This policy was revised in partnership with organisations and services who are members of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee both in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- 7.2 Member organisations and services of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee include frontline professionals with direct contact with people affected by domestic abuse on a daily basis. Although direct community engagement did not take place during the revision of this policy, representatives from front line services conveyed the experiences of the people they supported to ensure their inclusion in the policy.
- 7.3 This policy revision ensures the Council's compliance with Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.
- 7.4 No environmental or other impacts were identified as a result of this policy revision.

## 8. Background reading/external references

---

### City of Edinburgh Council Policies and Procedures

- 8.1 Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy: [Integrated Impact Assessment](#)
- 8.2 The Edinburgh [Forced Marriage Policy](#)
- 8.3 The Edinburgh [Adult Protection Policy](#)
- 8.4 The Edinburgh [Adult Protection Multi-Agency Guidelines](#)
- 8.5 The Edinburgh [Adult Protection Procedure](#),
- 8.6 The Edinburgh [Child Protection Procedures](#),
- 8.7 The Edinburgh [Domestic Abuse Housing Policy](#)

### Legislative Context:

- 8.8 [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)
- 8.9 [Anti- social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)
- 8.10 [Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)
- 8.11 [Children's Hearing \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- 8.12 [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

- 8.13 [Forced Marriage etc. \(Protection and Jurisdiction\) \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- 8.14 [The Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- 8.15 [Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- 8.16 [Protection from Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#)
- 8.17 [Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- 8.18 [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)
- 8.19 [Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- 8.20 [Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)
- 8.21 [Vulnerable Witnesses \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

**Relevant Documents:**

- 8.22 [Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls](#) (Scottish Government & COSLA, 2017)
- 8.23 [In Search of Excellence: The Coordinated Community Response \(CCR\)](#)
- 8.24 [Safer Lives: Changed Lives: A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland](#) (The Scottish Government 2009)
- 8.25 [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) (The Scottish Government, 2021)
- 8.26 [Violence Against Women Partnership](#) Guidance (COSLA/ The Scottish Government, 2016)

## **9. Appendices**

---

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Revised Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy

# Edinburgh’s Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy

Implementation date: 1 April 2023

## Control schedule

<b>Approved by</b>	Policy & Sustainability Committee
<b>Approval date</b>	21 March 2023
<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	Amanda Hatton, Director for Education and Children’s Services
<b>Author</b>	Angela Voulgari, Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee Lead Officer
<b>Scheduled for review</b>	April 2024

Date	Committee	Link to report	Link to minute
------	-----------	----------------	----------------

Version control

Subsequent committee decisions affecting this policy

Version	Date	Author	Comment
0.1			
0.2			

# Edinburgh's Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy

## Policy statement

---

1. This policy is a statement of commitment from all partners in Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and provides a set of guiding principles and definitions in relation to the prevention of domestic abuse, the support and protection of victims/survivors and their children, and the response to perpetrators. This policy is structured in line with [Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls](#).

## Scope

---

2. This policy statement is adopted by the Edinburgh Partnership and all the national and local agencies that work in Edinburgh to address domestic abuse and wider forms of Violence Against Women and Girls. It is based on a shared understanding by all partners of the extent and impact of domestic abuse and that it can never be acceptable or tolerated.
  - 2.1. This policy aims to reduce the risk generated by the lack of a shared understanding between services and agencies of the definition of domestic abuse, factors contributing to domestic abuse, and appropriate responses to safeguard people affected, including children.
  - 2.2. This policy promotes an ethos of collaborative working and appropriate information sharing to ensure that responses to domestic abuse are appropriate and proportionate to the level of risk identified, while centring the voices of victims/survivors and their children in all agreed actions.
  - 2.3. It highlights domestic abuse as a priority in all areas of public protection, and sets out the key shared principles of effective intervention, with which all agencies' operations and procedures will be consistent.
  - 2.4. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee currently consists of the following organisations, all of whom will adhere to the principles set forth in this policy:  
[The City of Edinburgh Council](#)  
[Police Scotland](#)

[NHS Lothian](#)  
[Edinburgh Women's Aid](#)  
[Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre](#)  
[Shakti Women's Aid](#)  
[Victim Support Scotland](#)  
[Children 1<sup>st</sup>](#)  
[Saheliya](#)  
[The University of Edinburgh](#)  
[The Multicultural Family Base](#)  
[Sacro](#)  
[Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services](#)  
[Health in Mind](#)

## Definitions

---

3. This Policy adopts the definition of domestic abuse set out in the [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#).
  - 3.1. This includes any course of behaviour which causes physical or psychological harm towards a current or ex-partner
  - 3.2. 'Abusive' behaviour includes any kind of physical or sexual violence, threats or intimidation that:
    - 3.2.1. make the partner or ex-partner dependent on the perpetrator of abuse
    - 3.2.2. isolates them from friends, family and support networks
    - 3.2.3. controls or monitors their daily activities
    - 3.2.4. restricts or deprives them of freedom
    - 3.2.5. frightens, humiliates, degrades or punishes them.
  - 3.3. This Act makes domestic abuse an aggravated offence if it involves a child, either by:
    - 3.3.1. The behaviour being directed towards a child
    - 3.3.2. Uses a child for the perpetrator to direct abusive behaviour towards their partner or ex-partner
    - 3.3.3. The child sees, hears or is present during an incident of abusive behaviour being directed towards the partner or ex-partner



- 3.4. Violence Against Women (VAW) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): This term refers to specific forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls overwhelmingly by men. This violence is perpetrated against girls and women due to gender inequality, which positions men and men's rights above the rights of women and girls.
- 3.5. Gender- Based Violence (GBV): Any violence or abuse directed against a person on the basis of their gender. In this context, the term 'gender' can encompass both someone's biological sex (male or female) as well as the gender identity they adopt. This includes trans men, trans women and non-binary people.
- 3.6. Honour-Based Abuse (HBA): Any form of abuse or violence directed towards someone who is deemed as having 'transgressed' or might 'stray' from the traditional codes of behaviour of their family, culture, community or religion. HBA can involve domestic, sexual and emotional abuse. It may or may not involve the current or ex-partner, and it can also involve additional family, extended family or community members, at times with multiple perpetrators. Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation are also forms of HBA, while HBA can also lead to so-called 'honour' killings.
- 3.7. Other abbreviations and terms that will be used throughout this document include:
- BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
  - FGM: Female Genital Mutilation
  - LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
  - MARAC: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
  - DSDAS: Disclosure Scotland Domestic Abuse Scheme

## Policy content

---

### 4. Equally Safe Priorities:

- 4.1. All work on gender-based violence in Edinburgh and work on domestic abuse specifically, will adhere and contribute to the four priorities of Equally Safe, Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls:
- i. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

- ii. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically
  - iii. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people
  - iv. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.
- 4.2. All stakeholders signing up to this policy will adopt a gendered analysis to domestic abuse, recognising that girls and women are primarily affected by domestic abuse due to patriarchal social structures and norms that enable abuse to continue to be perpetrated against them. This does not negate the reality that men and boys can also be affected by domestic abuse, but not to the same extent or prevalence.
- 4.3. All stakeholders signing up to this policy will further work to the principles of the Safe & Together™ Model. The Safe & Together™ Model aligns with the Equally Safe Strategy in identifying that domestic abuse is a negative parenting choice and in allying with the non-abusive parent to ensure their, and their child(ren)'s safety and wellbeing, while holding the abusive parent accountable for their actions.
- 4.4. All stakeholders will also recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of their sex, gender, religion, culture, age, marital/civil partnership status or socio-economic circumstances, and it occurs in heterosexual and same-sex relationships.
- 4.4.1. *According to Equally Safe, 'Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based', this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girls' subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence'.*
- 4.4.2. Defining abuse as 'gender-based' means that interventions with victims/ survivors and perpetrators must be based on an understanding of gender within any given societal context and how

this impacts people's understanding, preparedness and willingness to report domestic abuse.

4.4.3. To provide effective interventions, service providers recognise that domestic abuse is often underreported due to different barriers faced by different individuals seeking support. Someone's experience of domestic abuse can also intersect in complex ways with other protected characteristics like age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- Male victims/survivors of domestic abuse may find it difficult to report abuse because of gendered societal notions relating to masculinity and help-seeking, which will differ based on cultural interpretations of masculinity and its interplay with domestic abuse.
- People in their older years might experience domestic abuse combined with long-standing beliefs about the 'acceptability' of domestic abuse. They may be ineligible for financial support and might hesitate to share services (particularly refuge accommodation) with younger people. In addition, victims/survivors in their older years may need to be assessed for the possibility that they may be considered an adult at risk.
- People affected by disabilities/long term conditions are more likely to be living with the perpetrator, to have experienced abuse for a longer period before seeking support, and to be experiencing types of abuse specifically targeting their disability or condition. This can include obstructing access to healthcare, support, medication or equipment required to support their independence. People with communication difficulties might struggle to access services or to describe their experiences of abuse, while the perpetrator might not allow privacy during appointments or might obstruct access to services altogether. The experience of domestic abuse will also differentially affect people who might need long-term care or who might provide long-term care to the perpetrator of domestic abuse, introducing additional barriers to leaving or safely staying in an abusive relationship.
- LGBT+ people can experience domestic abuse and forms of coercive control, physical and sexual violence specific to their sexual orientation and gender identity such as threatening to 'out' victims/survivors to their friends and family. Victims/survivors can

be reluctant to report to services because they don't want to disclose being in a same-sex relationship or to explain their transition. Further, heteronormativity in society and in the provision of services can pose additional barriers for LGBT+ people seeking support to stay safe or to leave abusive relationships.

- People who are married or in a civil partnership might be reluctant to leave an abusive spouse for a number of reasons, including shared property, children, financial abuse (where the perpetrator has all funds and assets under their name and the victim/survivor has no entitlements) and the practical and financial challenges of seeking a divorce. Further, there could be religious/faith/community perceptions around separation and divorce being unacceptable, which further prevents victims/survivors from seeking support.
- Pregnant women are 60% more likely to experience physical violence than women who are not pregnant. Pregnancy is recognised as an additional risk factor for domestic abuse and a child protection issue. People who have children might be reluctant to leave an abusive relationship for fear of losing guardianship of their children, being deemed 'unfit' to care for them, or they may hold beliefs that children need to have two parents regardless of circumstances. Domestic abuse is a particularly high risk for young mothers as their vulnerability to abuse, social isolation, and potential lack of financial independence and life skills can increase their dependency on the perpetrator.
- Children can be traumatised from domestic abuse regardless of whether they were targeted, whether they witnessed incidents or whether they were in adjoining rooms while the abuse was taking place and their experiences can have long-lasting impacts in their later life. Further, 31% of girls and 16% of boys aged 13 to 17 reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse within their relationships. The overwhelming majority (95%) of young people experiencing intimate partner abuse are female, with less than half (45%) being known to children's social services. Within BAME communities (although not exclusively) children and young people can also be affected by domestic abuse in the context of wider harmful traditional practices and honour-based abuse such as forced marriage and FGM. These phenomena are also gendered in nature and disproportionately affect girls and young women.

- People from BAME backgrounds, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and Gypsy/Travellers can also face additional barriers due to the often-close-knit nature of their communities. Language barriers, racism and discrimination are identified as key issues for BAME people seeking support for domestic abuse, combined with a lack of knowledge around how systems and services work. Domestic abuse might also be seen as culturally or religiously 'acceptable', or even 'expected', based on long-standing traditional interpretations around gender roles. Uncertain immigration status and no recourse to public funds place additional barriers, as people affected by domestic abuse risk destitution if they seek support to leave an abusive marriage. Institutional racism and perceived and actual discrimination by services also often lead to domestic abuse being undetected for people from such groups.
- People from religious/faith-based communities can face spiritual abuse, where a perpetrator uses faith or religious doctrine to abuse the victim/survivor. For example, a perpetrator might force a Muslim victim/survivor to eat pork, which is forbidden in Islam. In other situations, religion might be used to prevent someone from seeking support, for example in some religions where divorce is prohibited, leaving people trapped in abusive marriages.
- People who are affected by both domestic abuse, substance use and/or who might be involved in the criminal justice system are likely to face multiple barriers to accessing support due to an increased mistrust of services. Additionally, support services often only have the capacity to deal with a particular issue rather than multiple intersecting issues, meaning that victims might need to access multiple services or be forced to choose what issue they need support for first.
- Social and economic status, level of literacy and numeracy, employment/unemployment, geographical location, prior experiences of trauma and the transience of certain populations (for example students) also interplay with the experience of domestic abuse in complex ways. Victims who are financially dependent on the perpetrator might feel unable to access support or to leave an abusive relationship, while those in different geographical areas might struggle to access information and support necessary to safeguard themselves or to leave an abusive relationship. It is vital that the specific circumstances of each individual who seeks support for domestic abuse are understood in

order to ensure that they have equal access to the level and quality of support they need.

4.4.4. It is crucial that any interventions with perpetrators or victims/survivors are sensitive to all parts of that person's life, on which the abuse may impact. It is also crucial to be aware of the complex dynamics within abusive relationships and possible attempts perpetrators might make to misuse/manipulate structures and processes intended to support victims/survivors. This could include the MARAC/DSDAS systems or to present to services as a victim of abuse while in fact being a perpetrator. Robust and proportionate risk assessment processes should accompany open communication between agencies to ensure that appropriate safeguarding support is available to the victim/survivor. The guiding principles for intervention outlined in this document can be applied to all the different contexts in which domestic abuse can occur.

#### 4.5. **Guiding Principles for Domestic Abuse intervention**

Equally Safe identifies that for its four key priorities to be achieved, we need to work together in a coordinated and accountable way that makes use of all our available resources. The key principles it identifies are:

##### 4.5.1. Everyone's responsibility

- The importance of primary and secondary prevention: We all have a role to play in ending domestic abuse, and any form of violence against women and girls. Strategies to address this and domestic abuse service provision within Edinburgh need to continue to include:
  - Primary prevention, seeking to prevent violence before it happens and targeting the whole population, but particularly children and young people. It is largely focused on attitudinal and cultural change, including a critical reflection of historic and ongoing gender inequality, as well as the influence of the media.
  - Secondary prevention, targeting and holding accountable perpetrators of abuse, and supporting victims/survivors who have experienced it to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing.
  - All employers in Edinburgh, in particular those in the public and third sectors, are encouraged to have a domestic abuse policy in place to address the needs of staff members who are either victims/survivors or perpetrators of domestic abuse.

- Principles of effective early intervention: this requires frontline professionals to be trained in identifying and managing risk related to domestic abuse. Our aim is to develop clear service-specific and multi-agency pathways from the suspicion, allegation or identification of domestic abuse to support for the victim/survivor and family, tackling the perpetrator's behaviour and attitudes, and intervening in proportionately to the level of risk. A trauma-informed understanding of situational decision-making and consequently the safeguarding needs of those affected by domestic abuse is essential in providing the highest standard of service to victims/survivors. Services should be able to:
  - support victims/survivors if domestic abuse is known, suspected or disclosed;
  - share information where appropriate and safe;
  - have knowledge of the resources available; and
  - Take appropriate action should a public protection concern arise, for example, where an adult is in need of additional safeguarding measures.
  
- The importance of a consistent approach: A consistent, holistic approach to domestic abuse through the development of a skilled workforce and robust inter-agency training is essential. This will include developing Trauma Informed Practice across the workforce to ensure that staff are aware of the impact of trauma and respond appropriately. Victims/survivors of domestic abuse and the cultural change we want to see depend on both specialist services and generic and universal services being confident and competent in identifying domestic abuse, understanding its impact, and responding appropriately.

#### 4.5.2. Broad participation

- Domestic abuse is a cross-cutting issue: tackling it and any form of violence against women and girls requires proactive, coordinated and timely intervention by a range of agencies and professionals, making use of a range of structures and mechanisms that protect victims/survivors and hold perpetrators to account. All available evidence suggests that it is addressed most effectively by a joined up, partnership approach, which includes statutory and voluntary organisations accepting a shared responsibility, whilst understanding their unique role.

- As well as holding the perpetrator to account and managing their risk, agencies should work with them to change their abusive behaviour. This should only be done by specialist services where staff have received the necessary training to work with perpetrators. Allowing perpetrators to remain invisible places additional burdens on victims/survivors and places them at significant risk of ongoing harm.
- Where any situation that relates to domestic abuse comes that comes to the attention of professionals might concern an 'adult at risk' as defined in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act (2007), a referral must also be made to the City of Edinburgh Council via Social Care Direct.
- All partners are committed to a shared vision and to united, sustained and effective action across all agencies and disciplines. This commitment is evidenced by our adoption of these shared principles and our pursuit of common objectives.
- Clearly defined indicators and targets closely linked to the goals and objectives set out in the Violence Against Women Performance Framework will be used to monitor the progress of the plan's objectives and to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's activities. In order to do this, partners commit to sharing data within agreed protocols, and evaluating interventions.
- Regular reports on the implementation and progress of the plan will be provided to the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and the Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection. People who use services will be consulted and involved in any significant changes to policy and provision.
- A shared understanding of risk and vulnerability factors among all agencies will assist the multi-agency collaboration and management of domestic abuse cases and ensure the needs, safety and wellbeing of victims/survivors are key priorities addressed at the earliest possible time
- In all cases, information should be shared in good faith with agencies and structures aimed at maximising support for individuals and families affected by domestic abuse, particularly where there are children involved. Lawful, responsible and robust information-sharing protocols are vital to:



- help keep victims/survivors and their children safe;
  - facilitate risk assessment;
  - provide support and advocacy services; and to
  - hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour.
- A focus on early identification, assessment and intervention, including the provision of skilled and attentive universal services, in conjunction with the availability of and access to specialist services, is the best way to keep victims/survivors safe.
  - Protection needs to be long-term and should not cease after separation between the perpetrator and victim/survivor. Services should work together to monitor and support families over the long term, particularly those with multiple or complex needs.
  - Agencies intervening in relation to domestic abuse cases where there are children resident in the household, or with significant connection to the adult involved, should work in accordance with the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). It is likely that children affected by domestic abuse will need a higher level of support than most children. This means that they should have a Child's Plan detailing what support will be provided, by whom and when, in order to keep them safe and promote their wellbeing. Agencies' intervention with adults should be consistent with the Child's Plan.

#### 4.5.3. Increased strategic priority

- According to the Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, "*effectively tackling domestic abuse is an organisational priority for both the Police Service of Scotland [...] and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service*". There are approximately 60000 calls to Police Scotland<sup>1</sup> due to domestic abuse every year costing the Scottish Public purse £2.3 billion per year<sup>2</sup>, and with referrals to specialist services increasing towards the later stages of the Scottish lockdowns<sup>3</sup>. Public Health

---

<sup>1</sup> Police Scotland: <https://tinyurl.com/dkvfm5df> (accessed on 14 February 2023)

<sup>2</sup> The Improvement Service, Elected Member Briefing Note: Preventing and Eradicating Domestic Abuse: <https://tinyurl.com/2n9jdc9p> (Accessed on 14 February 2023)

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls during Phases 1,2 and 3 of Scotland's route map (22 May to 11 August 2020): <https://tinyurl.com/54ue85uf> (Accessed on 14 February 2023)

Scotland considers domestic abuse a public health issue due to its detrimental impact on individuals and society as a whole<sup>4</sup>.

- The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee considers domestic abuse, and all associated forms of Violence Against Women and Girls to be a priority area of work for all statutory and third sector partners. It is committed to ensuring that partner organisations working to prevent and eradicate violence against women have the information, resources and training opportunities they need to provide the support needed by individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

#### 4.5.4. Making best use of resources

- Organisations supporting people at risk/affected by domestic abuse commit to making the best use of resources in the following ways to maximise benefits to the people they support and to their organisations:
  - Ensuring that staff and volunteers are trained in identifying, risk-assessing and responding to domestic abuse: A comprehensive training programme is essential and should include both single and multi-agency training at all levels delivered by both the statutory and voluntary sectors.
  - Organisations should provide opportunities for critical reflection and practice evaluation for workers, while multi-agency self-evaluation can be used to improve and develop practice.
  - Resourcing organisations and services: It is important that services are resourced adequately and appropriately. In an economy severely hit by austerity and the financial crisis brought about by Covid 19, partners need to consider how staffing and financial resources can be used more effectively to achieve the improvement to which the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee aspires. The partners are committed to exploring the best way to target spending and access additional national and local resources to achieve the most positive outcomes.

---

<sup>4</sup> Public Health Scotland: Domestic Abuse: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8pvruX> (Accessed on 11 April 2022).

- Further resources: professionals should consider colleagues both within and outwith their own organisations as resources for support, guidance and information. This also applies to professional networks, academics, and colleagues in relevant areas of work who can provide knowledge, insight and share the responsibility of supporting people affected by domestic abuse.

## Implementation

---

The responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and its constituent member organisations that primarily support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Individual partner organisations are responsible for ensuring that this policy informs organisational policies and that it is disseminated appropriately to staff and volunteers in their employment, and any individuals who use their services, if this is requested or appropriate.

---

## Roles and Responsibilities

---

This policy will be monitored by the Edinburgh Partnership and the Edinburgh Chief Officers' Group – Public Protection. All agencies within the partnership will be supported to adopt this policy as a minimum standard, with acknowledgement and recognition of existing strategic objectives of the associated agencies. This policy should align with partner agencies equality policies to prevent discrimination across the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

### **Useful Contacts for general advice and guidance:**

#### **Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline**

Free helpline with trained advisors on hand 24 hours a day

0800 027 1234; [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)

#### **City of Edinburgh Council**

[Social Care Direct](#)

If you are concerned about domestic abuse, you can refer a child or adult to Social Care Direct for support through Social Work.

Tel: 0131 200 2324

(Monday- Thursday 8.30am-5pm and Friday 8.30am to 3.55pm\_

Outside office hours, you can contact Emergency Social Work:

0800 731 6969

(Monday to Thursday 5pm-8.30am and Weekends from Friday 3.55pm to Monday 8.30am)

Email: [socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk)

### **Police Scotland**

In an emergency, or if someone's life is at risk, call 999.

If it is not an emergency, contact Police Scotland on 101.

### **Other sources of support**

Other organisations and agencies that can provide support, advice and information can be found on the City of Edinburgh Council website :

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/domestic-abuse/support-women-abused>

## **Related documents**

---

### **7. Legislative Context**

[Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)

[Anti- social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

[Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

[Children's Hearing \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)

[Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

[Forced Marriage etc. \(Protection and Jurisdiction\) \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)

[The Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)

[Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)

[Protection from Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#)

[Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)

[Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)

[Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)

[Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)

[Vulnerable Witnesses \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

## **Integrated impact assessment**

---

An Integrated Impact Assessment for the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Policy was completed on 2 May 2022 and is available on the City of Edinburgh Council website. The link to the Integrated Impact Assessment is:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/directory-record/1472867/review-of-multi-agency-domestic-abuse-policy>

## **Risk assessment**

---

9. This policy underpins the management of risk within social care services.

## **Review**

---

10. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis from April 2024.

## **Appendices**

---

### **Appendix I: Associated Documents**

[Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Housing Policy](#)

[Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls](#) (Scottish Government & COSLA, 2017)

[In Search of Excellence: The Coordinated Community Response \(CCR\)](#)

[Safer Lives: Changed Lives: A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland](#) (The Scottish Government 2009)

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) (The Scottish Government, 2021)

[Violence Against Women Partnership](#) Guidance (COSLA/ The Scottish Government, 2016)

[National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People](#) (The Scottish Government 2008)

[Getting it Right For Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#)

[National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation \(The Scottish Government, 2016\)](#)

[A place of greater safety](#) (Co-ordinated action against domestic abuse CAADA 2012)

[Beyond Violence: Breaking cycles of domestic abuse](#) (The Centre for Social Justice, 2012)

[Literature Review: Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse – Directions for Good Practice](#) (Scottish Government, 2008)

[Help for male victims of domestic abuse – Men’s Advice Line website](#)

[Domestic abuse and gender inequality: An overview of the current debate](#) (Centre for Research on Family and Relationships, 2013)

[Stronger Together: Guidance for Women’s Services on the Inclusion of Transgender Women](#) (Second Edition, 2015: LGBT Youth Scotland; LGBT Domestic Abuse Project and Scottish Trans)

[Out of sight, out of mind? Transgender People’s Experiences of Domestic Abuse](#) (LGBT Youth Scotland / Equality Network 2010)

[Where do you go? Who do you tell?](#) Consultation on the needs of gay, bisexual and transgender men who experience domestic abuse in Scotland (LGBT Scotland 2012).

[The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (sometimes known as the Istanbul Convention)

[The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)  
[Edinburgh’s Domestic Abuse Strategy and Improvement Plan \(2017\)](#)

[Getting It Right First Time \(SafeLives\)](#)

## **Appendix II: Additional information on domestic abuse and people with protected characteristics:**

### Domestic abuse and older people:

[Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse \(SafeLives Spotlights report, 2016\)](#)

[House of Lords Library: Domestic Abuse of Older People \(2021\)](#)

[Iriss: Older Women and Domestic Abuse \(2018\)](#)

### Men as victims of domestic abuse:

[SafeLives: Voices of Men and Boys \(key project findings, 2019\)](#)

[Respect Toolkit for work with male victims of domestic violence](#)

Taylor, J.C. et al. (2021): Barriers to Men's Help Seeking for Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, August 25, pp 1-28.

[Huntley, A.L.; Potter, L.; Williamson, E.; Malpass, A.; Szilassy, E. and Feder, G. \(2019\): Held-seeking by male victims of domestic violence and abuse \(DVA\): a systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis. BMJ Open. \(accessed on 23 March 2022\).](#)

### LGBT and non-binary people and domestic abuse:

['Out of sight, out of mind?' Transgender People's Experiences of Domestic Abuse. Scottish Trans, 2010.](#)

[Free to be Safe: LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse. \(SafeLives Spotlight report, 2018\)](#)

[National Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(NCADV\): Domestic Violence and the LGBTQ Community \(Blog Post, 2018\)](#)

### Pregnant women and parents:

[Domestic Abuse in Pregnancy \(NHS UK, 2021\)](#)

[Supporting women and babies after domestic abuse: A toolkit for domestic abuse specialists \(Women's Aid, 2019\)](#)

### Children and Young People:

[Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures \(Edinburgh and the Lothians\)](#)

[City of Edinburgh Council Child Protection Resources](#)

[Child Protection Involves Us All \(City of Edinburgh Council\)](#)

[Parenting through Domestic Abuse \(SafeLives Spotlight Report\)](#)

**Domestic abuse and people with disabilities or long-term conditions:**

[Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled People and Domestic Abuse \(SafeLives spotlight report, 2017\)](#)

[Gender Based Violence and Learning Disability \(Public Health Scotland, 2019\)](#)

[Disabled Women \(Scottish Women's Aid\)](#)

**People from minority, religious or faith-based communities and backgrounds:**

[Religious and Spiritual Abuse \(Living Without Abuse\)](#)

[Faith and Domestic Abuse \(Faith Action and Public Health England\) Violence Against Women and the Role of Religion \(VAWNet, 2005\)](#)

[Reconceptualising Coercive Control in Religious Contexts \(University of Strathclyde & Amina MWRC, 2021\)](#)

[Women from BME communities \(Women's Aid\)](#)

['Honour'-based violence and forced marriage \(SafeLives Spotlight Report\)](#)