



MERCHANT TAYLORS' BOONE'S CHARITY
30 THREADNEEDLE STREET
LONDON EC2R 8JB
0204 511 6285

Domestic Abuse Policy

Approved by the Corporate trustee on: 17th June 2025

Next due for review in: June 2028

Circulation status of the policy:

This is a public-facing policy and will be published on the Boone's Homes website.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Domestic Abuse is a serious, unacceptable and criminal behaviour, which can have a devastating effect on its victims and Merchant Taylors' Boone's Charity (MTBC) is committed to supporting its residents.
- 1.2. The Social Housing Act 2023 commits the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure social housing providers introduce a policy and procedure setting out how they will tackle issues surrounding domestic abuse, under the Neighborhood and Community Standard.
- 1.3. This policy sets out how MTBC will support victims of domestic abuse which includes controlling behavior and coercive behavior.

2. Aims and Purpose of Policy

- 2.1. This policy document sets out how MTBC will support residents who report incidents of domestic abuse to MTBC.
- 2.2. MTBC will ensure that staff who are in contact with anyone reporting domestic abuse are trained.

- 2.3. The regulator's requirements mean that registered providers must work cooperatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable residents to access appropriate support and advice. MTBC commits to do this where possible.
- 2.4. MTBC will take a victim-centered approach. Victims safety is important, and they will be treated sensitively at all times.
- 2.5. MTBC has a Safeguarding Policy, which is written in compliance with section 42 of 2014 Care Act. Under Appendix B of the Safeguarding Policy, domestic abuse should be addressed under safeguarding only if:
- 2.5.1. the person has care and support needs and is unable to protect him or herself from abuse.
- 2.6. When this criteria is met, domestic or suspected domestic abuse will be dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy.
- 2.7. When this criteria is not met, domestic abuse or suspected domestic abuse will be dealt with under this policy.

3. Definitions

3.1. Domestic Abuse

- 3.1.2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines abusive behavior as any of the following:
- Physical or sexual abuse
 - Violent or threatening behavior
 - Controlling or coercive behavior
 - Economic abuse
 - Psychological, emotional or other abuse.
- 3.1.3. Domestic Abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the above types of abuse. It does not matter whether the behavior consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- 3.1.4. Both parties must be 16 and over and "personally connected", defined as being married or civil partners; or have agreed to a marriage or civil partnership; are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other; or have a parental relationship with same child; or are relatives.
- 3.1.5. Domestic Abuse can also occur between adult children and parents, or those in similar relationships, or may involve dependent children visiting or living with grandparents.
- 3.1.6. MTBC only provides housing to those who are 57 and above, and can be an individual or couple. However, MTBC residents may experience domestic abuse from a visitor, such as a family member or partner.
- 3.1.7. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse further and is in two parts, as below. The first deals with the relationship between the abuser and the abused. The second part defines what constitutes abusive behavior:

Part 1

The behavior of a person 'A' (the abuser) towards another person 'B' (the victim) will now be domestic abuse if:

A's behavior towards B is abusive, and A and B are both over the age of 16 and are 'personally connected' to each other.

Part 2

A person's behavior is defined as abusive if it consists of:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behavior
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- Controlling or coercive behavior
- Economic abuse

'Abusive' behavior can consist of a single incident or a course of conduct. Also, 'A's behavior can be abusive towards 'B' even if it consists of conduct directed towards another person, such as 'B's child.

3.2. Coercive Behaviour

3.2.1. CPS.gov.uk defines Coercive Behavior as 'an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim'.

3.3. Controlling Behaviour

3.3.1. CPS.gov.uk defines Controlling Behaviour as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

4. Identifying and receiving reports of Domestic Abuse

4.1. MTBC residents can report any domestic abuse concerns to the Policy and Operations Officer (Almshouses).

4.2. They can be contacted in person in their office, or at:

- Telephone: 0204 511 6301
- The Policy and Operations Officer's email address can be found on her Rota outside her office.

4.3. If a resident would prefer to report domestic abuse concerns to an alternative member of staff, or the Policy and Operations Officer is unavailable, they can contact

- The Head of Philanthropy of the Merchant Taylors' Company ('the designated safeguarding lead'), who is designated as having responsibility for any safeguarding issues and can be contacted at:

- Telephone: 0204 511 6287
- Post: The Head of Philanthropy, Merchant Taylors' Boone's Charity, c/o Merchant Taylors' Hall, 30 Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8JB.

4.3.1. During a pandemic, there may be no staff presence at Merchant Taylors' Hall for significant periods in which case post may only be opened intermittently, and it is therefore advisable to use the email or phone contact details instead.

4.4. Alternatively, MTBC staff may become aware of, or suspect, that a resident is experiencing domestic abuse by (although not limited to):

- Reports by another person
- Noise complaints
- Rent arrears
- Repairs

5. Procedure

5.1. The procedure for MTBC staff to follow depending upon the circumstances of the individual case:

- Ensure the individual is safe. This may include but is not limited to: arranging for the locks to the victims flat to be changed urgently if the abuser is not a joint licensee with the victim, or arranging temporary accommodation such as a hotel for the victim if their abuser is a joint licensee and there are concerns over the victim's safety if they return to their flat at CBC. MTBC staff will liaise with other Housing Associations, the local authority and charities to ensure the resident is given alternative accommodation. Lewisham Council has a statutory duty to help those fleeing domestic abuse.

- If necessary, seek medical assistance
- Find out the wishes of the abused person
- Ascertain the basic facts (but do not start investigating) including:
 - date, time and place of alleged abuse
 - name of complainant
 - where different, name of person who has allegedly been abused
 - nature of alleged abuse
 - description of any injuries observed
 - account of the incident which has been given
- Inform the Head of Philanthropy, as the designated safeguarding lead, immediately
- Write a report recording any observation (photographs are acceptable with person's permission) and details of accounts given (in the persons own words if possible)

- If a person requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that they are sensitively advised that some cases of alleged abuse, where the level of risk posed by the perpetrator, will be referred to the appropriate agencies such as the police.

- 5.2. The designated safeguarding lead will gather information and arrange a meeting between the designated safeguarding lead, the Policy & Operations Officer (Almshouses), and the Chair of trustees to establish the facts. A full record of the meeting will be made. If the Chair of trustees is not available, the meeting will include another trustee who has agreed to stand in for the Chair of trustees. This meeting is to establish facts and decide given the nature of the report, if the individual and the incident fall within the Care Act section 42 criteria for referral to the safeguarding team or if another course of action is more appropriate.
- 5.3. At the meeting, MTBC staff and the Chair of trustees will assess whether the police should be called. Staff will consider the severity of the incident and the level of risk posed by the perpetrator, with consideration given to what the victim wants to happen. Staff will also use guidance provided by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance to assess whether police should be called. Staff will keep a record of this decision.
- 5.4. Other courses of action may include, but are not limited to:
 - Signpost or make referrals for anyone experiencing domestic abuse to the relevant authorities and organisations who can provide help, advice and support. This may include but is not limited to: Refuge, Men's Advice Line, Lewisham Victim Support. Where possible we will co-operatively with these agencies and authorities to support the resident.
 - Provide practical support to victims who wish to remain in the home for example changing the locks or additional safety and security improvements like additional door locks and window locks.
 - Notifying the police or other agencies who are able to help the resident experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.5. Where a victim has, or appears to have a cognitive impairment, and is unable to follow or fully understand the guidelines within this policy, the victim may be considered a vulnerable person. As such, staff will refer to the Safeguarding policy.

6. MTBC Residents

- 6.1.1. If the victim is a resident and is unable to stay in their home due to abuse, violence or the threat of violence, MTBC will, where possible, provide temporary alternative accommodation.
- 6.1.2. If MTBC is unable to do this, MTBC staff will liaise with other Housing Associations or the local authority. Lewisham Council have a statutory duty to help those fleeing domestic abuse.
- 6.1.3. If the perpetrator has a key to the victim's home, and is not a joint licensee, MTBC staff will arrange for the locks to be changed.
- 6.1.4. MTBC staff will help put victims in touch with local or national agencies which specialize in dealing with victims of domestic abuse.

7. Action Against Perpetrators

- 7.1. MTBC can take action against a MTBC resident if they are in breach of the terms of the License. MTBC's policies on Anti-Social Behaviour and Managing Unacceptable Behaviour allow MTBC staff to take action against Licensees who behave in a violent, intimidating or otherwise anti-social manner.
- 7.2. If it is reported to MTBC staff that an MTBC resident, who is a joint-licensee with another resident, is abusing the other resident, then MTBC will take the appropriate steps, with guidance from the necessary external agencies. These external agencies may be (but are not limited to): the police, the local authority, organisations that provide advice and legal advice providers.

8. Recording and Monitoring

- 8.1. MTBC staff will record all cases of domestic abuse reported to us, and we will report annually to the Trustees on the number of cases against protected characteristics to ensure no group is disadvantaged and all groups have equal access to support and services.

9. Review Period

- 9.1. This policy is to be reviewed every three years, or sooner if the law, legislation or best practice dictates.

10. Relevant policies and legislation

- 10.1. The Social Housing Act 2023 requires Registered Providers to have a Domestic Abuse policy under the Neighborhood and Community' Consumer standard.
- 10.2. Also relevant are the following policies and Acts:
 - MTBC's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
 - MTBC's Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
 - MTBC's Safeguarding Policy
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing 2014
 - Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004
 - The Care Act 1996
 - Social Housing Act 2023

11. Data Protection

11.1 It is recognized that incidents of Domestic Abuse are extremely sensitive and private incidents for victims to report and MTBC shall maintain the confidentiality of a disclosure regarding abuse and violence to the extent allowed by law and unless to do so would result in significant harm or risk of harm to any person on any cases that are reported.

11.2 MTBC will however, share relevant information with local agencies such as the police, Social Services and other involved agencies where necessary, to deal with cases more effectively by either gathering extra evidence to carry out enforcement measures against the perpetrator or sharing information in the interests of the victim to provide better or more effective support.

12 Staff training

12.1 MTBC staff, namely the Policy and Operations Officer (Almshouses), will undergo training to ensure that they are able to spot signs of domestic abuse and adequately support victims in line with this policy.

13 Supporting the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse

13.1 Where possible, and when contacted by the local authority, MTBC will support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse.