



POLICIES

Protection from Abuse

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1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff within Stonewall Housing are:

- Familiar with the definition of abuse
- Clear about when they need to look into issues of potential abuse both to protect clients and to ensure they are meeting their legal responsibilities
- Able to deal appropriately with alleged or suspected abuse.

1.2 This policy has been drafted in line with local authority guidance and The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. By following this policy the staff within Stonewall Housing will be carrying out all their duties of care as support workers in this field as well as working within Stonewall Housing's ethos and support framework.

1.3 Staff should read this policy in conjunction with Stonewall Housing's:

- Child Protection Policy
- Confidential Reporting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Supported Housing Policy and Procedure

2 Policy Statement

2.1 Stonewall Housing will not accept or tolerate any type or level of abuse towards its clients. The existence of abuse and neglect can be related to the existence of discriminatory attitudes towards people. Discrimination is institutionalised within our society and has a particular impact on our client group, as such discrimination and the potential for abuse may be embedded within personal attitudes towards clients of Stonewall Housing.

2.2 All clients of Stonewall Housing are entitled to

- Privacy
- Be treated with respect
- Lead as independent life as possible
- Have choice in how they live their lives
- Complain about the services they receive without fear of reprisal
- The protection of the law
- Have their rights upheld regardless of gender, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability, age, religion or cultural background.

2.3 Stonewall Housing will work together with other agencies involved in client support to prevent abuse occurring where possible but deal with it appropriately and effectively if it does occur. All allegations will be taken seriously regardless of the source of information.

2.4 Staff have a duty of care to act in the best interests of the allegedly abused person. Abuse goes unnoticed and ignored when people make assumptions about whose responsibilities it is to make enquiries or to act on the clients behalf: staff should always assume that it is their responsibility to act in the light of suspected or alleged abuse.

- 2.5 Where the alleged abused person is able to make choices they must be advised of the options and their wishes respected unless a statutory responsibility to intervene arises. If they the tenant wish to have advocates to enable them to make those choices then Stonewall Housing will assist them to identify and access that support.
- 2.6 Where staff feel that intervention is necessary staff should pursue action in a way that causes the least amount of disruption to the alleged abused persons way of life and should be aimed at preventing the risk of abuse reoccurring.
- 2.7 Stonewall Housing will make all efforts to work with the client or other support networks. Consent will be gained from the client to involve them in the investigations. Each case will be dealt with sympathetically as possible but protection of the individual is the priority.
- 2.8 When initial referrals are made staff may identify that someone referred to stonewall Housing has been subject to abuse. It is therefore important that staff understand the measures that are to be taken to ensure that the abuse does not continue to happen. These issues must be clarified and discussed at the interview stage so an appropriate support plan can be implemented.

3. What Is Abuse

- 3.1 Abuse in this context is when a person has caused harm, or may be likely to do so, to the physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial or material well being of a client. It may also involve the denial of basic human rights.

Physical abuse:

Any use of unnecessary force - hitting, pulling, pinching etc.

Sexual abuse:

Rape and sexual assault or any sexual act to which the client has not consented or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting. This does not necessarily involve contact but could include indecent exposure, harassment (physical and verbal), and exposure to pornography or the use of pornography.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse:

Shouting, screaming, intimidation, threats of harm or abandonment, denial of expressions of choice or option, denial of privacy or dignity, deprivation of contact in any form, controlling- denial of freedom to associate, isolation or withdrawal of services or threat of such.

Financial or Material Abuse:

Theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property or benefits.

It is important to remember that:

- Abuse may be a deliberate act or the failure to act appropriately. Staff should be particularly aware of this with regard to their own practice.
- An individual may experience one or more type of abuse at the same time.
- This may be within a continuing relationship or a professional service context
- The abuse may be carried out by other clients or by people who have deliberately formed a relationship with a vulnerable person in order to exploit them.
- An individual may have experienced a history of intimidation and victimisation. This may impact on their wish or ability to access help or support or effect whether they view certain behaviours as abuse at all.

4. PREVENTION

4.1 All staff need to be aware of the need for a risk assessment when they have concerns about the potential for abuse. In Stonewall Housing's case this must be with any potential client and the outline of the potential abuse and what action taken to prevent it must be recorded in the support plan. Where there are concerns about the potential for abuse, assessment and support planning should include a record of decisions and what action to be taken.

Staff of Stonewall Housing are forbidden to act as power of attorney or be included in service users wills. The only time staff should handle service users money is in the collection of rent and only when an official Stonewall Housing receipt can be given.

4.2 Areas that should be addressed to assist with the prevention of abuse are:

- All Stonewall Housing's relevant policies and procedures must be followed.
- Staffing ratios should be at a level that allows maximum support for services users.
- Staff training should be carried out on the issues of abuse and risk assessment and all staff must be clear about policies and procedures relating to abuse.
- Mechanisms for gathering client views about the quality of life inside the project or services provided must be in place.
- The Housing Services Manager must ensure that clear procedures exist for ensuring that the collection of client views results in action on relevant items and issues raised.
- Liaison at all times with the RSL responsible for the property.
- Strategies for maintaining contact with next of kin should be advised where appropriate.
- Quality assurance frameworks must be adhered to at all times.
- Stonewall Housing Staff are not permitted to offer financial advice, accept gifts, be included in a will or be power of attorney for any current or ex-tenant.

5. Indicators of Abuse

5.1 Staff should be aware of some of the signs of abuse:

- Any unusual and unexplained behaviour
- Different reactions to individuals
- Frequent visits to GP or Hospital
- Unexplained change in material circumstances
- Inconsistency of explanations
- Inability and tendency to spend long periods in bed
- Anxiety or confusion
- Tendency towards social isolation or withdrawal
- Unexplained injuries especially at different stages of healing
- Personal possessions going missing

This list is not exhaustive

6. What Should you Do

6.1 Stonewall Housing are an organisation that is contracted to provide support services on behalf of local authorities. Staff have a duty to report any allegation or suspicion of abuse to their immediate line manager.

The Service Manager will keep a Protection from Abuse Log, which records all allegations and a summary of each investigation and its outcome. This log is reviewed annually to gauge any possible patterns and to determine if the current policy is effective. (See Appendix 3).

The Service Manager will report any concerns directly to the local authority concerned. If there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed or the situation indicates the possibility of criminal activity then the police will be informed.

6.2 If a client or perpetrator discloses the abuse staff should

- Remain calm
- Listen carefully to exactly what is being said and ensure that notes are taken
- Ensure the client knows you are taking them seriously
- Assure the client that they are doing the right thing by talking to you
- Never be judgemental or opinionated
- Establish the wishes of the client
- Let them know what you are going to do
- Be aware of the possible need for forensic evidence
- Explain that you will need to share the information with your line manager who will decide what action to take. This may mean that the information may not be kept within the team.
- Accurately record as soon as possible what has been said and done.
- Report immediately to your line manager. If they are not available then you should report to another manager on duty or the Director.
- If the person is in immediate danger then their safety should be assured and the emergency services may need to be called.

6.3 You should not

- Appear shocked, disgusted or angry in any way
- Make any judgement about anything except to show concern
- Give any assurances that a certain course of action will be taken at this point
- Confront the alleged perpetrator
- Press for any details that they are not inclined to give
- Promise to keep any of the discussion a secret.
- Contaminate or remove any evidence

7. Initial response

7.1 Following initial disclosure and staff reporting to their line manager or in the case of no disclosure but suspicion of abuse, the manager will decide whether this policy needs to be initiated. All allegations of abuse should be taken seriously so unless there is clear, irrefutable evidence that the alleged abuse could not be taking place this

policy should be followed. The Housing Services Manager should consult with the Director or in their absence the Chair of the Management Committee, should they be unsure what action needs to be taken.

The Housing Services Manager should report the alleged or suspected abuse to the local authority and the Police if there is a suspicion of a criminal offence having taken place. All or any of these bodies may wish to conduct a joint investigation and this should be negotiated with them on a case-by-case basis.

Stonewall Housing's confidentiality policy should be adhered to at all times and information only shared with other bodies without the clients consent when there is a need to protect the welfare of the client or members of the public.

- 7.2 The Housing Services Manager should decide whether they wish to speak to the client who has disclosed the information or whether the statement of the staff member is sufficient to take action upon. Their responsibility in this instance is to establish as far as possible the exact facts and details of the case.
- 7.3 The Housing Services Manager will then make the decision as to whether any immediate emergency action has to be taken to ensure the protection and safety of any clients. This may include barring someone from a project, removal of a client from a service to other accommodation (if available) for a period or suspension of a member of staff. As this action will by its nature indicate some issue for other people obviously the Services Manager should think through the implications before acting in this way but they should always bear in mind as their overriding priority is the safety and protection of the allegedly abused client.
- 7.4 The Service Manager will keep a Protection from Abuse Log, which records all allegations and a summary of each investigation and its outcome. This log is reviewed annually to gauge any possible patterns and to determine if the current policy is effective. (See Appendix 3).

8. Investigation

- 8.1. The Housing Services Manager will then need to initiate an investigation into the alleged or suspected abuse and how they will do this will depend on the context of the case. Suspected abuse will always be a sensitive issue so it is essential that the investigation is properly co-ordinated. On reporting the issue to other authorities, such as the RSL and Local Authority the manager should have established who would be conducting the investigation.

If another party do undertake the investigation then Stonewall Housing's role becomes one of following their lead within their procedures.

- 8.2 At times there may be cases where there needs to be a joint investigation. If so then a joint planning meeting must be arranged. If due to time constraints this is not possible then the meeting will have to be agreed by phone.
- 8.3. It should be clear
 - Who is to speak to all individuals - ideally for consistency the same individuals should conduct all interviews. If the alleged or suspected abuse is of such a serious nature the Police or Social Services may want to take over the process, in which case Stonewall Housing may take the role of witness to the investigation rather than investigator.
 - All efforts should be made to ensure the matter is dealt with as quickly as possible.
 - How the meeting should be recorded - all meetings must be recorded in writing, however it may be the case that an audio or videotape may need to be used.

- Who is to be kept informed during the process?
- What support is necessary for all involved - clients, staff and other agencies involved, and who should be providing it.
- Who is to evaluate the evidence and who is to make the final decisions and recommendations?
- When the final case conference on the issue will take place - the aim of this would be to establish any ongoing monitoring necessary.

8.4 If there has been no need for a joint investigation established, then the Housing Services Manager or Director should devise their own plan that covers all the above areas. It would always be good practice in either event to hold a multi agency case conference following any investigation to assist with establishing and maintaining joint working protocols.

8.5 Following the Investigation

8.6. The recommendations of the investigation will be carried out either by Stonewall Housing or in conjunction with other agencies.

8.7 There may have been several outcomes to an investigation that impacted on the service including:

- Clients may have been interviewed - and may have become distressed and will need additional support.
- Clients may have been removed from services and this may lead to other clients asking questions. Staff will need to work with them around how they can move forward without knowing the details of what happened.
- Clients may have been arrested or there may have been significant police presence at the service causing disruption and anxiety - staff will need to manage the disruption and support clients as best they can.
- Staff may have been suspended, dismissed or arrested - clients may now not trust staff or be suspicious of why someone has left but they have not been told why. This will need to be managed for all staff to be able to support clients again.
- There may be significant changes in the work of the service that need to take place.
- The investigation may have concluded that the allegations were false- there may need to be work done around why the allegations were made and the impact that may have on those involved. Accused clients and staff may still be within the service and may need to be protected and supported to enable them to continue to use or work in the service.
- The investigation may have shown that abuse had occurred but that it was not of such a nature as to require removal of either the victim or perpetrator. Staff will need to work sensitively to support both parties but while still aiming to prevent the repetition of such abuse.

8.8 A summary of each investigation and its outcome will be kept in the Service Manager's Protection from Abuse Log. This log is reviewed annually to gauge any possible patterns and to determine if the current policy is effective. (See Appendix 3).

9. Victims and Perpetrator Support

9.1 Where either / both the victim and perpetrator of the abuse are Stonewall Housing clients, support plans need to be put in place covering during and following investigation, outlining exactly what is to be done and by whom.

9.2 Stonewall Housing staff have a duty to provide support equally to all clients, yet it may not be appropriate for the same people to provide support to both victim and perpetrator.

9.3 staff need to be able to manage whatever feelings are brought up for them around these issues by using supervision and any additional support that may have been identified as necessary. By doing this they should then offer objective support as a team to all involved regardless of role within the matter.

9.4 it is possible that due to the nature of the abuse or the circumstances of the case that Stonewall Housing will need to cease offering a service to the perpetrator of the abuse. This decision must not be taken lightly and the RSL should be involved.

9.5. Staff have no duty to provide support to victims or perpetrators who are not clients of Stonewall Housing.

10. Recording

- Any conversations with clients or action taken should be recorded as normal within the tenant's file.
- In addition, the Supported Housing Officer and the Housing Service's Manager should complete the abuse record.
- The abuse record will be kept in the clients file, with copies been sent to the Director of Stonewall Housing and other agencies involved in the case on a need to know basis.

11. Staff Support

11.1 Issues of abuse can bring up many issues for those who have to work with and support the people directly involved. Staff support should be a consideration for managers throughout and following any investigations, with an awareness being held that additional resources may have to be allocated to ensure staff can continue to offer an appropriate service to clients but also sustain them in the process.

12. Training

12.1 Line Managers have the responsibility to ensure that staff are supervised, trained and supported to be able to deliver support to the required standards. It is also vital that staff are supported to identify and report where support fails, that could possibly be deemed as neglect or abuse.

12.2 During induction all staff will be made aware of the protection from abuse policy and offered training were necessary.

12.3 All staff will familiarise themselves with the means of identifying possible abuse and alongside managers within team meetings, identify good systems of support to clients.

12.4 This awareness will be monitored and developed in an ongoing way through supervision, appraisals and training when necessary.

APPENDICES

1. Roles and Responsibilities of other agencies
2. Stonewall Housing Abuse Record
3. Protection from Abuse Log

APPENDIX 1

The Role and Responsibilities of other Agencies

SOCIAL SERVICES

The initial responsibility for investigating abuse will lay with Stonewall Housing. However if the alleged abuse involves a vulnerable adult the responsibility for investigation lies with Social Services. Social Services will have their own procedures to be followed.

Contacts

*Newham	020 8430 2000
*Islington	020 7527 2000
*Hackney	020 8356 5000
*Haringey	020 8489 0000

POLICE

The primary role of the Police is to prevent criminal activity taking place wherever possible and to deal with it effectively and appropriately when it does occur. The Metropolitan Police have dedicated units dealing with the following:

- Community Safety Unit - all racial, domestic violence and homophobic crime
- Sapphire Unit - all crimes of a sexual nature
- Missing Persons Unit - all reports of persons lost/ missing and at risk
- Public Protection Unit - the monitoring, registering and investigation of all sex offenders and potential violent offenders.

*Contact details to be confirmed.

RSL

The RSL may need to be contacted when the abuse is first reported. Contact should be made with a Senior Manager at the relevant RSL.

NIHHA	0207 457 2400
Circle 33	0207 288 4000
L & Q	0208 532 4013

APPENDIX 2

Stonewall Housing Abuse Record Form.

Supported Housing Officer Name:

Scheme details:

Name of alleged abused client/s:

Name of alleged perpetrator/s:

Date of first suspicion / allegation:

First disclosure made to/ suspicion raised by/ abuse discovered by:

Type of abuse alleged / suspected/ discovered:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Physical | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neglect | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Psychological | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Financial | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Discriminatory | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other agencies notified of the allegation/ suspicion / discovery

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Social Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Police | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| RSL | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Brief description of the alleged/ suspected/discovered abuse

Statement

To be completed by the person making the allegation. If the person does not wish to complete the form the staff member should complete it indicating why the person could not do it himself or herself.

Please give details of the incident and if possible including dates and times if you can remember.

Signed:

Date:

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE LOG

SCHEME NAME:

THE ALLEGATION				ACTION
Who made the allegation?	Date allegation was made	Who is the victim in the allegation?	SUMMARY OF ALLEGATION (signed by staff who received the allegation)	SUMMARY OF ACTION TAKEN (signed by Manager)