



Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance




Whole Housing  
Domestic Abuse

**SURVIVING**

**ECONOMIC**

**ABUSE**



# Property management & domestic abuse during COVID-19

[www.dahalliance.org.uk](http://www.dahalliance.org.uk)

[www.survivingeconomicabuse.org](http://www.survivingeconomicabuse.org)



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# Introduction

The Government's stay at home advice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic can create new challenges for people experiencing domestic abuse. Victim/survivors may be at home with the perpetrator and unable to escape.

As a property manager, you could be the first to know about domestic abuse. You are also in a unique position to spot potential warning signs.

You may be worried that you cannot communicate with your residents in the same way and could place them in danger. This guidance will help you to identify residents who are experiencing domestic abuse and know what you can do to help.

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) have created comprehensive guidance for the social housing sector which is drawn upon in this resource. We have highlighted useful resources throughout that you can access for further information.

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) is the only UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of and transforming responses to economic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) is a partnership between two housing providers, Peabody and Gentoo, and the domestic abuse charity Standing Together. DAHA aims to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse.

SEA and DAHA work in partnership, through the Whole Housing Approach (WHA), to address the response to domestic abuse in private housing. Funded by MHCLG, the WHA is a multi-agency project which endeavours to improve housing options and outcomes so that victim/survivors can achieve stable housing, live safely and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts.

The Institute of Residential Property Management are working closely with DAHA, SEA and WHA to provide essential information on domestic violence during the current climate.



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# Spotting the signs

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. It can encompass, but is not limited to the following forms of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- economic
- emotional

Economic abuse may be amplified at this time and could be some of the first or only warning signs of abuse. Residents may get in contact to discuss issues with paying the rent or service charge which could provide key opportunities for conversations or to spot the signs of economic abuse. Many of the signs of domestic abuse can be misinterpreted as antisocial behaviour (ASB) or 'problem tenants'. It is important to be vigilant to ensure that you can identify abuse and respond safely.

## **Signs of domestic abuse include:**

- damage to the property, particularly atrium and flat doors
- residents reporting money worries such as not having control over their money or being prevented from accessing financial support
- noise nuisance complaints
- police callouts
- neighbours reporting concern
- substance misuse
- requests for lock changes, enhanced security or replacement keys for doors
- a sense that something isn't quite right

## **in lettings further signs can include:**

- presence of or increase in rent arrears, victim/survivors are four times more likely to receive an eviction notice due to rent arrears
- repair call outs, particularly for window and kitchen damage and holes in walls and doors, especially external and bathroom doors



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# Your role – recognise abuse and signpost victim/survivors to specialist support

You are not expected to carry out the role of a specialist domestic abuse worker but can sensitively support your resident by signposting them to specialist services. This could include hosting details of support helplines on residence noticeboards in communal areas.

You may have concerns about how to communicate with a resident without placing them in danger. There are ways to do this without raising suspicion, for example the COVID-19 outbreak can be an innocuous reason to check in with residents.

DAHA outline how to communicate safely in their guidance and have published Peabody's strategy for communication when domestic abuse is suspected on their website.

Familiarise yourself with the national domestic abuse services available (full list available at the end of this guidance), check what specialist services are being delivered in your local areas and let victim/survivors know, in a safe way, what specialist domestic abuse support is available.



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## Supporting Staff and Colleagues

Domestic abuse may also be experienced by staff and colleagues and employers have unique opportunities to contact their staff.

We encourage you to take steps to ensure that your team members are supported whilst in self-isolation.

DAHA have put together a [suite of free and helpful resources](#) such as examples of domestic abuse policies from housing organisations to give you an idea of what you can do.

SEA have created a resource for [work colleagues](#).

## Joint tenancies and working with perpetrators

Letting agents are likely to be in communication with perpetrators of abuse. You may find that some options for dealing with their behaviour are currently unavailable, as emergency measures mean that tenants cannot be evicted for three months. This may be a concern for landlords who have previously terminated a joint tenancy at the request of a victim/survivor.

During this crisis there is also a shortage of suitable emergency accommodation for victim/survivors and their children, and for perpetrators so that they can leave the family home. You may have access to empty properties and could consider whether you can support a tenant to find accommodation. You may also want to consider contacting your local authority to inform them about any void properties which could be used to accommodate victim/survivors.



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Financial support such as dual housing benefit can help to pay for housing costs for a victim/survivor when there are two tenancies in place. See SEA's resource, [Finding a safe place to live](#), for more information.

External stressors are not the cause of abuse, however they can be understood as triggers which can exacerbate abuse or be used by perpetrators as an excuse for their behaviour. Many households will be facing significant concerns about their economic situation and ability to pay their bills, including rent or service charge.

Clear communication about financial concerns during this uncertain time will help to alleviate some of this stress and will support victim/survivors who are struggling to mitigate economic abuse.

If there are rent or service charge arrears, consider whether these may be a result of economic abuse and how you may be able to support the victim/survivor and safely hold the perpetrator to account. Remember that debts can make a victim/survivor economically dependent on the perpetrator and prevent them from leaving.

## Raising awareness

Raise awareness about domestic abuse within your communities so that residents can identify abuse and know what they can do if they need help and support.

Consider displaying information in communal areas with useful contact numbers or safety information, such as the [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) or [Silent Solution](#). [SEA's resource](#) for friends, families and neighbours on spotting the signs of economic abuse during the COVID-19 outbreak can be distributed digitally through email, websites or social media channels.



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# National Domestic Abuse Services

[National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#): A confidential, 24-hour service run by Refuge. 0808 2000 247

[Respect Phoneline](#): Support for perpetrators to stop using abusive/violent behaviour: 0808 802 4040

[Karma Nirvana](#): Advice and support for victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage: 0800 5999 247

[Forced Marriage Unit](#): Government office providing information and advice for British nationals forced into marriage: 020 7008 0151, 020 7008 1500 (out of hours number)

[Southall Black Sisters](#): Advice and support for black & minority ethnic women experiencing all forms of gender-related violence: 0208 571 0800 (Helpline) 0208 571 9595 (Enquiries)

[Respond](#): Support for people with learning disabilities who have experienced trauma and/or abuse: 0808 808 0700

[Deafhope](#): Domestic and sexual abuse support for the deaf community: 020 3947 2600 (Phone) 079 7035 0366 (Text)

[Childline](#): Free 24-hour helpline for children in distress or danger: 0800 1111  
Women's Aid online chat: Chat directly with a Women's Aid support worker (Mon–Fri, 10am–12pm).



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# National Domestic Abuse Services

[Women's Aid online chat](#): Chat directly with a Women's Aid support worker (Mon–Fri, 10am–12pm).

[Live Fear-Free Helpline \(Wales\)](#): A 24-hour service available on 0808 80 10 800. Live chat is available or you can email [info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales). A 24-hour text service can be accessed on 07860 077333.

[Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline \(Scotland\)](#): A 24-hour service available on 0800 027 1234. You can also email [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk). An online chat service is also available.

[Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline \(Northern Ireland\)](#): Managed by Nexus NI, the helpline is available 24-hours a day on 0808 802 1414. You can also email [help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org) or use the web chat service.

Emergency Services: Always inform a tenant to call 999 in an emergency, the police are responding to calls as usual. There is a [Silent Solution](#) to alert the police for those unable to speak when calling.

See [DAHA's guidance](#) and [SEA's resource](#). Economic abuse and the coronavirus outbreak, for more information about how services are operating during this time and how victim/survivors can access legal advice and financial support. Many services are still operating during the crisis and have enhanced their online and text support.

The DAHA guidance also outlines useful things to discuss if you make contact with someone you are concerned about.





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## Further information and resources

DAHA have collated a range of [useful information and resources](#) from other organisations and Government.

Surviving Economic Abuse have published a [series of resources](#) for women experiencing economic abuse (Tools to Thrive) and the professionals supporting them (Tools to Support). This includes resources about the COVID-19 outbreak.

For more information about responding to domestic abuse within the Private Rented Sector, see the [Whole Housing Approach Toolkit](#).

If you have any questions about something you have read in this document, are interested in receiving training or would like discuss how your organisation may be able to improve the response to domestic abuse, please contact: [daha\\_team@standingtogether.org.uk](mailto:daha_team@standingtogether.org.uk) or [info@survivingeconomicabuse.org](mailto:info@survivingeconomicabuse.org).



*“The amazing teams behind this guidance “*