

SERVICE UPDATE

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| Name of Function: | Corporate Services |
| Date: | 12.04.2024 |
| Title of Update | Domestic Abuse and Women's Refuges |
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Update:

At the meeting of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on 23 January 2024, it was agreed to request that a Service Update be issued which would incorporate information from partner agencies in relation to:

'Domestic abuse and women's refuges in regards to communal toilets'.

At this time, there are no communal refuge spaces available in the Aberdeen City area. All refuge provisions are independently operated, consisting of individual properties dispersed throughout the city. These facilities are dedicated to offering safe, private environments for women and their children in need.

Grampian Women's Aid currently manage the six individual properties which are designed to provide privacy and safety. Each property is equipped to support the residents in a self-contained environment, ensuring security and comfort while maintaining dignity during such challenging times.

Nationally, the Women's Aid network continues to maintain that communal spaces, including toilets, are exclusively available for women and their children. This policy supports the safety and privacy of those using refuge services.

Women in need of refuge can self-refer to Grampian Women's Aid to discuss available options and secure a placement in one of the independent properties. Additionally, women can be referred to refuge from other services that they are engaging with.

With refuge space being limited, those subjected to domestic abuse can access emergency accommodation through temporary accommodation provisions. Aberdeen City Council have a duty to help any member of the public if it is likely that staying in their home will lead to domestic abuse being threatened or committed.

In Aberdeen, we are shifting towards a more holistic approach to refuge with less of a focus on refuge accommodation itself but rather ensuring that we provide safe and suitable accommodation with the appropriate support for the individual. As part of this initiative, we have allocated funding for two

additional Domestic Abuse Support Workers within our in-house team, and have established a new role of Housing Liaison Officer for Domestic Abuse within the Housing and Support Team.

This integrated approach allows us to proactively identify needs and risks, aiming to prevent crises before they occur. By embedding domestic support services within existing teams, our goal is to intervene early, providing support before individuals require rehousing or face imminent harm. The Housing Liaison Officer will facilitate seamless support pathways between our services, ensuring timely and consistent assistance for tenants in need.

Additionally, Aberdeen City Council implemented the [Domestic Abuse Council Housing Policy](#) in March 2021. The policy applies to current and prospective tenants and includes actions to increase awareness and training of council staff and allows for perpetrators of domestic abuse to be rehoused away from the family home. Rehousing perpetrators in this way will provide an alternative to disrupting families by allowing them to stay in their own home preventing homelessness whilst the police and courts take appropriate action against the perpetrator.

Beyond housing, there are a number of specialist support services who provide a comprehensive range of support services including counselling, legal advice, and assistance with securing long-term housing solutions. All local support available can be found on the [Domestic Abuse Support](#) page within Aberdeen Protects.