

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE

Resources to Develop Your Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group (HOG)

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TOGETHER**
against domestic abuse

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Contents

- 3** PLANNING AND DELIVERY
- 4** IDENTIFYING YOUR GROUP MEMBERSHIP
- 5** SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TO IMPLEMENT YOUR GROUP
- 9** GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Planning and delivery

To support Local Authority housing provider's implement the steps in creating a Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group (HOG), the Whole Housing Approach (WHA) has provided a framework, templates and resources for getting started and for embedding and delivering the work. The templates for getting started are designed to help housing providers map and review their existing response and identify gaps and areas for improvement. Guidance and templates are offered on each section as outlined within the HOG Guidance that reflect best practice which are:

- Identifying Group membership
- Mailing list
- Additional documents

We recommend the identification of a postholder such as a Domestic Abuse and Housing Coordinator or of a similar level to lead, coordinate and oversee the Domestic Abuse HOG process. The lead's responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

- Acting as a key point of contact between the Domestic Abuse HOG, it's members and internally within the organisation
- Mapping current responses and evaluating how their organisation is performing
- Speaking and working with the local VAWG services including the specialist by and for services, and relevant partnerships to understand how victim/survivors are experiencing the service
- Planning and preparing for the Domestic Abuse HOG and ensuring actions that come out of this are completed satisfactorily and to deadline.

Identifying your group membership

The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) recommends extending memberships to a wide range of external organisations in order to improve the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) approach by making contact with the strategic Lead for each service. In addition, it is recommended for the lead's to identify deputies of an equivalent level who can attend the meetings if the lead cannot attend, as decisions will need to be made on behalf of their organisations. One member from each organisation should attend the meetings on a regular basis. There could be more than one member attending from the same organisation but from different teams for example, the local authority's Housing Options, Anti-Social Behaviour and Housing Management teams.

It is estimated that contribution from the members will take one hour every quarterly period and the recommended frequency of meetings are every twelve weeks. However, the group can meet more frequently if necessary. Consider extending an invitation to the local authority Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategic lead, to the first meeting by way of introduction with the option of attending future meetings as and when required. As the group membership grows, the mailing list can be reviewed periodically.

The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) recommends the Domestic Abuse HOG membership include the following organisations:

- Local Authority housing departments
- Housing associations
- Homelessness organisations
- The main domestic abuse service
- VAWG services operating locally including services supporting victims and survivors from Black and Minoritised communities, LGBTQ+ communities, those with Disabilities, Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma communities
- VAWG services supporting migrant women
- Other specialist services operating in the local area

The Domestic Abuse HOG must be part of the CCR partnership response to VAWG across local authorities, through coordination and bringing together leads from housing providers and services homelessness organisations, VAWG services including specialist 'by and for' agencies, as well as other local specialist services. The Domestic Abuse HOG can also support and encourage Housing providers and services to deliver the Whole Housing Approach (WHA).

Supporting documents to implement your group

Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Terms of Reference (TOR) can be broad but should be detailed enough to clearly outline the principles, purpose and aims of the Domestic Abuse HOG and how these will be met, the roles and responsibilities of group members and the group membership list. Your TOR should include:

Purpose of the Domestic Abuse HOG – this will outline the overarching purpose of the group (please refer to ‘Purpose of a Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group’ section within the wider guidance), which service user group this is intended for and the local authority area this operates in. Detail how housing providers are well placed to spot and respond to domestic abuse and list the effective interventions implemented by your organisation in responding to domestic abuse and supporting victims/survivors.

Aims of the Domestic Abuse HOG – this includes setting out expectations of the group membership, the implementation of the group’s action plan, accountability on the delivery, how progress will be monitored and potential constraints in the effective delivery of key outcomes. The aims should include the process of reporting back to the strategic board. There should be a note on the frequency of the meetings.

How the aims will be met – The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) states the following delivery components through which the aims will be met and what this entails:

- *Quality Assurance*: attendance of members, seniority level and deputies attending the meeting and administration of the group.
- *Partnership*: engagement with the annual action plan, how this will be embedded and practiced. Providing support in developing the borough’s strategic objectives in line with the VAWG Strategy.
- *Performance Monitoring*: list the types of data that will be collated from each organisation including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data. This section can include gathering updates on programmes such as the Sanctuary Scheme and any other programmes operating in the local area.

- *Knowledge and innovation:* this will include ways of working, sharing best practice, learning from other organisations. Where local areas are combined such as two local authorities working as one, consider ways of showcasing their work that distinguishes their work nationally.
- *Resources:* resourcing issues and solutions should be identified, how these will be escalated and to whom, for example the strategic board.
- *Equalities:* how will the group ensure equality of access to professional support for all under-represented groups and those with protected characteristics. Include a list of these groups.
- *Governance:* this will include how and when the group’s protocols will be reviewed, improve management and overall performance, and the effective management and reporting of serious operational issues. In addition, provide accurate recording of minutes and report on progress.
- *Roles and responsibilities of the group members:* outline the membership of each of the representative organisations in the group, the expectations around the members attendance, reporting back to their organisations and deputies attending the meetings. Include the process of electing the Chair and the frequency when this will happen. This section can include all the relevant policies that apply to the group for example, information sharing, confidentiality, the local authority’s EDI mission statement. Consider how champions or leads for particular specialisms can be identified based on the knowledge and experience of members of the group and include this.
- *List of members:* include a list of all group members who will form part of the Domestic Abuse HOG, (please refer to the ‘Creating a Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group (HOG)’ section in the wider guidance).
- *Principles:* this section will feature the expectations of the ways of working for the group.

Ways of Working

This document compliments the TOR by setting out clear expectations of how group members can work together to achieve the aims and purpose of the Domestic Abuse HOG. In addition, it will provide clearer explanations for members with varying degrees of knowledge of VAWG. It should include:

Definition of VAWG: Introduce the definition that is applied by the local authority’s VAWG Strategic Partnership Board which could be the United Nations or the Governments definitions, or both can be used in conjunction. Refer to the ‘Ways of Working’ section of the HOG Guidance document, for further information.

Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Partnership: outline the process and purpose of the CCR approach, including a list of the multiple forms of VAWG.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: this section will detail how the CCR approach will embed the local authority's EDI mission statement. This can include reference to all other relevant policies such as:

- The Sex Discrimination Act
- The Race Relations Act
- The Disability Discrimination Act
- The Equality Act
- The Gender Recognition Act
- The Equal Pay Act

Agenda

The Domestic Abuse HOG is part of the governance structure that the local authority will coordinate and the agenda should reflect the main purpose of the group by including the following recurring items for each quarter's meetings. These are in addition to stand alone items that are identified and relevant to the group, at any given time:

- **Data collection and analysis** - This can include EDI data collection
- **Part 4 duty** - members can share best practice and find consensus on the implementation of Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act. Where there are joint local authorities, this means best practice can be drawn from a wider area, provide faster information sharing, and enable better collaboration on knowledge and innovation.
- **Policy updates** - members can discuss the impact of policy and legislation and where they can call for policy change.
- **Action Plan** - members update on the progress of the implementation of the action plan.
- **Best practice/areas of concern** - members can share updates on what they are doing that distinguishes them nationally as well as use the group to troubleshoot arising issues.
- **Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR's)** - the Coordinator can share learnings from local DHR's.
- **Training/Guest Speakers** - members can contribute their ideas on training and inviting guest speakers that are relevant to the group.

Annual Action Plan

It is recommended the group's action plan outlines:

- The group's vision and commitment to preventing and ending all forms of violence against women and girls and supporting victims/survivors
- The objectives of preventing VAWG, supporting victim/survivors, partnership working and holding abusers to account
- The priorities the group are committed to delivering, the local authority area/s in which the CCR will operate, inclusivity of all relevant statutory and voluntary organisations and communities, and how this will be measured
- Identify priorities and activities for the action plan
- Effective implementation, delivery and accountability of the action plan
- Monitoring progress, solutions focussed and escalation of issues hindering the progress of the action plan
- Reporting on overall performance and progress
- Frequency of the Domestic Abuse HOG meetings
- Frequency of reviewing the action plan

Your Local VAWG Strategy

A core focus of the Domestic Abuse HOG is to identify priorities and activities for the annual action plan specific to the Domestic Abuse HOG that contributes to the overall delivery of the borough's VAWG Strategic objectives. The action plan will focus on the strategic objectives of preventing domestic abuse, supporting victims/survivors, partnership working and holding abusers to account. The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) recommend sending out a copy of the local authority's VAWG Strategy to all members ahead of the first meeting and periodically thereafter.

Ensuring an Intersectional approach

Anti-Racism Charter (ARC) - It is suggested the group can utilise either the local authority's or an individual Anti-Racism Charter to inform, improve and ensure their work is intersectional and meaningful. A copy of this charter should be sent to all members ahead of the first meeting and circulated periodically. Please refer to the VAWG Anti-Racism Charter example in the wider guidance document.

Glossary of Terms

ARC – Anti-Racism Charter

The Anti-Racism Charter was formed by the Anti-Racism Working Group to address racism in the VAWG sector. The Charter calls for end to unequal partnerships where unhealthy power dynamics operate creating inequality for Black and minoritised women.

CCR – Coordinated Community Response

The Coordinated Community Response brings services together to ensure local systems truly keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account, and prevent domestic abuse.

DA – Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

DAHA – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA) working with housing providers to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process.

HOG – Housing Operational Group

The Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group (HOG) brings together local agencies in one forum to address domestic abuse within and between different housing sectors.

TOR - Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (TOR) is an agreed document which sets out the working arrangements for a network or forum and outlines the purpose and commitments of this.

V/S – Victim/Survivor

Victim/Survivor refers to the individual who is being subjected to domestic abuse. We know that different individuals have different language preferences. We have chosen the words victim/survivor for consistency, but we respect how individuals want to be identified.

VAWG – Violence Against Women & Girls

Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) is defined by the United Nations Declaration (1993) on the Elimination of Violence Against Women: “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”

WHA – Whole Housing Approach

The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) is a framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim/survivors in a local area. It brings together under one umbrella all the main housing tenure types alongside the housing options and support initiatives needed to help people experiencing domestic abuse to either maintain or access safe and stable housing.

