



## **New housing guidance launched on domestic abuse and COVID-19**

Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland (CIHS) have [published new guidance](#) for social landlords to assist them in responding robustly to domestic abuse as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

While staying at home is a necessary step to prevent the spread of the virus, for the thousands of women and children in Scotland who are experiencing domestic abuse, home is not a safe place to be. Through their responses to homelessness and their approach to housing management, social landlords can play a vital role in securing the safety of women and children experiencing domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the new guidance, SWA and CIHS recommend that social landlords develop specific domestic abuse policies, engage with local Women's Aid groups and Violence Against Women Partnerships and take steps to ensure victim/survivors know where to get support.

The guidance also reminds social landlords of their responsibilities regarding homelessness and how they can prioritise domestic abuse victim/survivors to ensure women and children are able to safely move home or a perpetrator be rehoused.

Jo Ozga, Policy Officer at Scottish Women's Aid said:

"The reality is that women already face complex decisions and a wide range of barriers preventing their ability to safely escape an abusive partner. The current pandemic means that women and children's mobility is constrained further, their economic vulnerability is increased and the challenges women face in escaping abusive partners are exacerbated.

"We urge all social landlords to take note of this new guidance and to actively use the unique position they are in to respond to the needs of women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse within their properties."

Callum Chomczuk, National Director, Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland said:

"We know from reports across the world that self-isolation in response to COVID-19 has led to an increase in reports of domestic abuse. Landlords, in particular social

landlords in councils and housing associations, have a pivotal job in supporting victims who are at even greater risk of harm

“Right now, many are considering what services they can and cannot continue throughout the crisis. This includes decisions on whether they can continue to allocate housing to those who need it in way that is safe for their staff and their prospective tenants. While recognising the importance of keeping their staff safe, it is vital that landlords do not stop providing housing to help victims of domestic abuse and take all necessary steps to ensure victim survivors get the support and advice they need.”

### **Additional information**

For further information on the guidance, contact [Jo Ozga](#) at Scottish Women’s Aid or [Callum Chomczuk](#) at the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland.

Scotland’s Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline remains available 24/7 for anyone with experience of domestic abuse, those concerned about someone else and professionals with questions about practice during this time.

Call on 0800 027 1234, email [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk) or web chat at [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)