



Policies: Harassment and Abuse

Don't suffer in silence CHISEL will not tolerate any kind of harassment. We will provide support and advice to tenants who are subjected to harassment, as well as alternative accommodation where appropriate. We have an Anti-Social Behaviour policy which explains how we deal with harassment and a copy can be supplied on request.

We will take a hard line against perpetrators, including getting injunctions and taking legal actions to evict where possible.

Rehousing

CHISEL will rehouse tenants who are victims of harassment; if this is their preferred option (although waiting times can be a problem if suitable properties are not available). CHISEL gives high priority to tenants who need rehousing because of harassment.

What to do?

Contact the housing manager immediately if you or your household are being harassed. The Housing Manager will contact you within one working day. This is to take further details of the harassment and discuss any immediate action to be carried out. If necessary, emergency repairs will be done.

We will advise you to report the incident to the police, who will try to identify the perpetrators with a view to conviction. The police treat all racial incidents as crimes.

We will also advise you to keep a diary of incidents so that they can be recorded. We will put you in touch with specialist organisations, who will be able to give you more support.

We will make further visits to discuss progress, action to be taken and rehousing where appropriate. If we can arrange alternative accommodation, we will every effort to move you in within three months.

Working together

In the longer term CHISEL has a strong commitment to eradicating all forms of harassment and wishes to look at working with local residents, community groups, the police and other organisations.

Racists and people who commit anti-social behaviour are a small minority of the community. An approach that can bring the rest of us together in tackling harassment, will make a real difference.

PLEASE DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE - CONTACT THE HOUSING MANAGER FOR SUPPORT AND ADVICE ABOUT WHAT CAN BE DONE.



Domestic violence

If you are living with someone who is threatening or violent towards you, physically or sexually, or their behaviour is affecting your mental health, you should contact the housing manager for help and support.

CHISEL will be sympathetic towards anyone who is living in this type of situation and we give support and assistance as a priority to those suffering domestic violence.

It is usually women who suffer domestic violence by a partner or ex-partner. However, CHISEL recognises that domestic violence can also include violence between other family members, for example, violent behaviour to a parent from a child. Men may also be subjected to domestic violence.

We will maintain strict confidentiality and will never pass any information to the violent party except with your consent.

Child abuse

CHISEL will always take appropriate action where child neglect or abuse is suspected. This is the only situation where we will act on anonymous information. Our action involves contacting the relevant Social Services department and the NSPCC.

Support and advice

If you contact us we will arrange to discuss your personal situation with you and to give you support and advice, within the same day where possible. This can be at your home or at the office, and will normally be with a female member of staff - whatever suits you.

If you are living in a violent situation you will need to get as much advice and support as possible so that you can work out exactly what you want to do. For this reason we will put you in touch with specialist organisations that can give you expert advice about injunctions, your legal rights, housing options, counselling services, your rights affecting your children, etc.

Although we can give you advice about your tenancy rights and on the rehousing options available, as landlords we cannot advise you what you should do. Instead we will urge you to get independent advice to ensure that you choose the best course of action.

WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU NOT TO GIVE UP YOUR TENANCY UNLESS YOU HAVE PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION ELSEWHERE.

Temporary accommodation

CHISEL has no temporary accommodation, but if you need to move out of your home immediately and have nowhere to go, we will try to help you find somewhere. This will normally be through the local authority or women's refuges.



Re-housing

We give a high priority to tenants requiring housing because of domestic violence. However, re-housing depends on your tenancy status. It also depends on the legal options open to you. It is complex and this is why you must get expert advice.

Evidence of domestic violence

We will only give approval for re-housing when some form of proof is provided. We appreciate that getting proof is sometimes difficult. However, proof could include a doctor's report, police report, supporting statement from a social worker, friend or neighbour. These are just examples.

Sole tenant

If you are a sole tenant and you need re-housing, you can apply for a transfer and will be given priority.

Joint tenant

If you are a joint tenant, we will normally be unable to re-house you directly. This is because we have a limited supply of housing and it would mean us creating an additional tenancy (your partner, as joint tenant, would still have the right to occupy the home). We will assist you instead in applying to the local authority.

There are two exceptions to this, which you should seek independent advice on. First, you may be able to get the joint tenancy assigned to you, either by voluntary agreement from your partner, or by going to court. Once the tenancy is in your name, you could qualify for a transfer with CHISEL. Secondly, you have the option of ending the joint tenancy on behalf of you and your partner, having got prior written agreement from CHISEL to re-house you. If you end the tenancy, your partner's right to the home is also ended.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU GET INDEPENDENT ADVICE ON THESE OPTIONS.

If the tenancy is not in your name If the tenancy is not in your name, we will help you apply to the local authority, under homelessness law. If you are refused, we may be able to reconsider your case.

Applying to the local authority If you do not qualify to be re-housed by us, then we advise you to apply to the local authority, under homelessness law. The housing manager will help you with this.

If, for some reason, you were refused (for example, some local authorities will not consider women without children), we may reconsider your case. But we won't be able to do this if the refusal was because you turned down an offer.

If you wish to move to another town or area, we will give you as much help as possible through mobility schemes.



REMEMBER - you don't have to tolerate violence or threats of violence - contact the housing manager and arrange to discuss the situation in confidence.