

## Domestic Abuse Policy

### Introduction

The Home Office (2013) definition of domestic abuse is:

*“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality”.*

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional.

Controlling behaviour – a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour – a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

It is recognised that domestic abuse is widespread, traditionally under-reported and can happen in any household.

### Policy statement

Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG) believes that no one should live in fear of domestic abuse and will take steps to advise, assist and support any person suffering from or threatened with domestic abuse.

GUHG will take a flexible approach in responding to incidents of domestic abuse to take account of the varying circumstances of victims and the different courses of action that may be possible and appropriate.

Where a customer is either in fear of domestic abuse or the victim of actual domestic abuse, GUHG will co-ordinate a multi-

agency/departmental approach to provide as much support as possible to assist the customer in safely securing the property for them.

GUHG will consider taking action to evict the perpetrators of domestic abuse using the powers available under the Housing Act 1996 and other relevant legislation.

## **Objectives**

Domestic abuse affects housing providers as landlords, as local authority partners and as employers. This policy concentrates on GUHG's roles of landlord and local authority partner.

- All staff are expected to support GUHG's commitment to dealing with domestic abuse.
- GUHG will provide a victim centred approach with their safety being our primary concern.
- All cases will be treated in the strictest confidence. Information will not be passed to a third party without the consent of the person concerned except where GUHG believes there is a risk to children or vulnerable adults.
- GUHG will continue to engage with the domestic abuse representative scheme and relevant agencies, including the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator, the Bedfordshire Domestic Violence Partnership, the Northampton Domestic Abuse Service and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, in order to respond to the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.
- Staff will be working with the procedures that accompany this policy.

The procedures will emphasise that victims will:

- be treated with respect and be offered privacy
- have equal access to services, including being given full information on options available
- be advised that their safety (and their children's) is paramount
- be in control of the referral process, including making their own decisions.

## **Other related policies**

Allocations Policy

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Complaints Policy

Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy

Equality, Diversity and Customer Care Policy

Harassment Policy

Safeguarding From Abuse Policy

Risk Appetite Framework and associated Risk Assessment Policy

Tenancy Changes Policy

## Other related documents

Bedford Borough Council Strategy to Tackle the Causes and Effects of Domestic Abuse 2017 - 2020

Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership Domestic Homicide Review

Central Bedfordshire Council Domestic Abuse Strategy 2016 - 2020

## Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed as part of the policy review programme.

**Customer consultation:** November 2017

**Equality Impact Assessment Carried Out:** Initial screen

**Person responsible for review:** Director of Independent Living and Better Lives

**Supported in the review by:** Independent Living Team Leader

**Ratified by:** Operational Leadership Team

**Date of review:** November 2017

**Date of next review:** November 2020