

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 and emotional abuse

Has a profound impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with little confidence that they can do anything to change the situation.

Physical abuse

Can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.

Sexual abuse

Can include rape and coerced sex, forcing a victim to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusal to practice safe sex or use contraception, threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.

Financial abuse

Can include controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, accruing debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent or refusing to allow them to study or work.

Discriminatory abuse

May manifest itself as any of the other categories of abuse, however what makes discriminatory abuse distinctive is it is motivated by oppressive and discriminatory attitudes towards a person's:

- disability
- physical appearance
- learning disability
- mental ill-health
- sensory impairment
- race
- religion
- gender/ gender identity
- age
- culture
- sexual orientation

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.

Family and inter-generational abuse

Grand Union Housing Group will respond to concerns related to family and inter-generational abuse, and recognise how it differs from partner abuse, for example, if the perpetrator is the victim's teenage or adult sibling, child or grandchild. Careful case management is required when dealing with family and intergenerational abuse due to the complexities of family composition and safeguarding implications.

Elder abuse

Research has found that domestic abuse is experienced by both women and men regardless of age, disability and ethnic background. Elder abuse can be even more detrimental to a victim's wellbeing due to problems with mobility, mental health and social isolation. Older people may have come to accept some aspects of domestic abuse as the 'norm' dependent upon their generation. For example, in the past the male of the relationship may have been the only one to work and was traditionally seen as the breadwinner and thus have control of their finances and limit their partners' access to money; we would now accept this as financial abuse.

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

Policy statement

Grand Union 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.

We 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. We will ensure that staff and contractors are abuse aware and that there are simple and efficient channels of reporting and recording concerns.

Where a customer is either in fear of domestic abuse or the victim of actual domestic abuse, we will co-ordinate a multiagency/departmental approach to provide as much support as possible to assist the customer in living safely.

Grand Union 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 Grand Union's roles as landlord and local authority partner.

- All staff are expected to support our commitment to dealing with domestic abuse. We 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 we believe that there is a risk to children or vulnerable adults.
- We 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.
- We will provide employees with clear and practical guidance to ensure we support and protect victims of abuse, allowing victims to have more information about their choices so that they feel empowered to fulfil their ambitions.
- Grand Union works in partnership to offer support to perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour. We will work with perpetrators to increase their motivation, skills and knowledge and build confidence and resilience to combat their abusive behaviour patterns.

Staff will be working with the procedures that accompany this policy.

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
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Tenancy Changes Policy

Other related documents

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

Policy details

Diversity and inclusion

Domestic abuse approaches have traditionally focused upon heterosexual partner abuse and more recently have been seen to address abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships. Grand Union recognises that all abuse must be addressed and the appropriate support offered to victims of abuse.

We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation. In the context of dealing with domestic abuse cases, we aim to:

- meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds and take into consideration gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity
- ensure our service is responsive and meets the needs of our existing and prospective customers
- understand the cultural implications and barriers to reporting domestic abuse
- ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our service

All Grand Union colleagues are expected to work to the Domestic Abuse Policy to ensure that customers are treated as individuals and with fairness and respect.

Case management

All records regarding domestic abuse will be recorded on Open Housing in the appropriate module and related documentation saved on Documotive/Sharepoint with access to this information restricted to the Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding team, Partnerships, DA & Safeguarding Manager and Director of Wellbeing and Safeguarding.

Making the link to safeguarding

A significant number of adults who need safeguarding are often experiencing domestic abuse in some form. Despite the overlap between supporting abuse victims and safeguarding adults, the two have developed separate professional practices.

If domestic abuse is an isolated issue and there are no other safeguarding concerns then support can be sought via forums such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). If there is more than one safeguarding issue present, such as domestic abuse in addition to physical or mental health disabilities then a referral should be made to Safeguarding Adults so that services can be coordinated to deal with the potentially complex issues.

However, we will always encourage staff to make a Safeguarding Adults referral even if it is just for information so that agencies are mindful of our concerns, as there may be other issues we are not aware of. There is also strong, evidenced based links between domestic abuse and child abuse. Exposure to domestic abuse is always detrimental to children, although the impacts may vary. Children exposed to abuse at home may be affected by physical and/or emotional abuse, neglect and ongoing psychological damage.

This means that in domestic abuse cases where children are present, practitioners have a duty to involve Children's Services to ensure any children are adequately safeguarded.

Action plan

The action plan associated with this policy is to be reviewed March 2022.

Monitoring

Managers will ensure that procedures relating to domestic abuse are followed and that all colleagues are trained on how to identify and report concerns.

Cases will be reviewed to ensure that best practice is being adhered to and that partner agencies are enlisted to assist with providing support.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed in accordance with any changes to government legislation and best practice, but no later than three years from the date of the last review.

Person responsible for review:	Director of Wellbeing & Safeguarding
Supported by:	Partnerships, DA & Safeguarding Manager
Ratified by:	Leadership Team 23 February 2021
Date policy reviewed:	January 2021
Date of next review:	February 2024