



## Domestic Abuse Policy

Version 1.0

Date of Last Update: 09/09/19

## Version Control

*Note: minor updates increase version number by 0.1, major updates increase version number by 1.0.*

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Sections Amended</b>	<b>Date of update</b>	<b>Approved by</b>
1.0	First issue in new template	09/09/19	Matt Pyke

## Introduction

Yarlington Housing Group recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue and that incidents of domestic abuse are common and critically affect many people's lives.

All of Yarlington's customers should be able to live in their homes without the fear of violence, abuse or harassment from a partner, former partner or any other member of their family or household.

All reports of domestic abuse will be taken seriously and will be treated in a sympathetic, supportive and non-judgmental way. We will always offer advice and assistance to anyone who reports domestic abuse to us.

We are committed to dealing with all cases of domestic abuse for all customers regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. We understand that the perpetrators of abuse can be both male and female and the victims themselves can be male and female. All cases that are reported to Yarlington will be dealt with sensitively and all cases will be investigated.

## Definition

The Government's core definition of domestic abuse is:

"Any incident of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploring 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 is an act or pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

The definition includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called 'honour based violence', female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily.

## Purpose

The aim of this policy is to:

- Ensure systems are in place to deal with domestic abuse efficiently and effectively by taking a victim orientated approach.
- Ensure that individuals experiencing domestic abuse are provided with a fair, consistent and sympathetic service, within the constraints of the law. The resources available to Yarlington will be used in helping them to resolve their situation.
- Supporting victims by giving them information about services and support available to them.
- Ensure that our overriding priority is the safety of victims of domestic abuse, and in particular any children and/ or vulnerable people within that household.
- Ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency approach when dealing with reports and supporting victims of domestic abuse.
- Support the Company's overarching Safeguarding policies and related policies, providing further guidance where there is domestic abuse.

## Our Approach

We will take a victim oriented approach to domestic abuse and we will make the safety of those threatened with violence our priority.

All members of staff across Yarlington who come into contact with a customer are responsible for reporting any concern that they may have in relation to safeguarding, or believe that a customer may be the victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Adult and Children Safeguarding Policies.

When Domestic Abuse is disclosed to us by a customer where appropriate we will offer to call the police with their consent or to call another agency that will be able to assist. All Yarlington employees will have access to Domestic Abuse supporting materials and contact numbers that can be passed to the victim. We will be sensitive to the needs of those affected by domestic abuse and we will give those who are experiencing domestic abuse the opportunity to opt for a member of staff of the same gender to deal with their case where possible, practical and appropriate.

We will conduct interviews, investigate and document all reports of domestic abuse within our Open Housing system, ensuring this does not interfere with any Police investigations. Information stored within our system is secure and accessible to only those with appropriate access. We will complete the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification checklist. With the customers support and within reason we will look at ways to help the victim feel safe in their home. We will encourage victims to consent to us sharing information with agencies that can help and support victims of domestic abuse. There may be occasions that we share information without consent for example where there is a risk to the safety of a person or where Yarlington has a duty to disclose.

With the support of the victim we will refer to our Financial Responsibility Team and/ or Inspired 2 Achieve to offer additional support with finances and employment.

We will signpost those experiencing domestic abuse to relevant organisations that can provide legal advice as necessary.

Where we have evidence against a perpetrator of domestic abuse, we will take firm action against them. This will be done with the support of partnering agencies. Action will not be taken if the victim's safety is compromised at any point.

The victim will be kept updated in all circumstances and we will keep them informed of any action that we plan on taking.

Any witnesses to domestic abuse will be supported through our investigations and where required will be signposted to additional support.

## **Training**

All customer facing/ front line staff will be trained in how to deal with initial reports of domestic abuse. Details of any report of domestic abuse will be passed to our Tenancy Compliance Team who will contact the victim safely.

## **Related Policies**

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- GDPR
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Hate Crime Procedure
- Access to Housing Policy

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or in accordance with legislation changes, Government initiatives or changes in best practice.