

## **Domestic Abuse Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Falcon Housing Association C.I.C (FHA) understand the significant impact that domestic abuse can have on both tenants experiencing it and their household members. Therefore, FHA have a victim-centred approach to assisting tenants who experience domestic abuse.
- 1.2 At FHA we believe that domestic abuse is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. FHA believe that our tenants should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner or any other member(s) of their household or visitor(s). All reports or signs of domestic abuse are taken seriously, are dealt with sensitively and in strict confidence.
- 1.3 FHA is committed to tackling domestic abuse, by working in partnership, sharing best practice, and ensuring our staff respond to this issue in a coordinated and consistent manner.
- 1.4 FHA also recognise that our staff may experience domestic abuse and therefore, we will support them in accordance with our Domestic Abuse Policy.

### **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy should be used by employees, contractors, tenants and stakeholders of FHA to understand how FHA will respond to disclosures or incidents of domestic abuse relating to those living in our properties or receiving a service from us.
- 2.2 FHA will work with those individuals experiencing domestic abuse irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.3 We aim to improve the safety of people who are survivors of domestic abuse and prevent further incidents of domestic abuse whenever possible. When it does occur, we will take a collaborative, survivor-centred approach to supporting people who are affected. We will do this by:
  - Raising awareness of domestic abuse and how to get help.
  - Ensuring all staff know their role in tackling domestic abuse.
  - Creating a safe environment where survivors of domestic abuse can talk.
  - Embedding intersectional and anti-racist practice.
  - Ensuring staff are trained and able to recognise signs of domestic abuse and know how to respond to them.
  - Making safeguarding referrals where needed.
  - Supporting survivors to make decisions about their housing options.
  - Taking appropriate action against perpetrators.

- Signposting perpetrators to agencies who can offer them support.
- Ensuring there is support available on an emergency/out of hours basis.
- Working to foster and improve our work with other support services.
- Acknowledging domestic abuse as a crime and a standalone issue separate from antisocial behaviour.
- Responding to reports of abuse in a holistic way, where the survivor and their safety, is put first.
- Ensuring equality and diversity is considered throughout our response and that the service we provide is inclusive and accessible to all.

### **3. Policy Statement**

#### **3.1 What is domestic abuse?**

As defined in The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, abusive behaviour is defined as any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- Economic abuse – any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person’s ability to: acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services

3.2 Domestic abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the above types of abuse. It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

3.3 Both parties must be 16 and over and “personally connected”, defined as being married or civil partners; or have agreed to a marriage or civil partnership; and or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other; or have a parental relationship with the same child; or are relatives. Domestic abuse can also occur between adult child and parents, or those in similar relationships.

3.4 Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant 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 exerting control over those means, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

3.5 Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts, assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim. This definition includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

3.6 FHA's approach is as follows, we will:

- Not tolerate domestic abuse
- Always support victims
- Treat any report as an emergency
- Be sensitive and listen
- Not put victims at further risk
- Treat anything reported confidentially

#### **4. How to report domestic abuse**

4.1 Victims of domestic abuse who are in immediate danger, should always call the emergency services on 999. If they are unable to talk, they should press 55 when prompted and the call will be transferred to the police.

4.2 The 24-hour free National Domestic Abuse Helpline can be contacted for advice on – 0808 2000 247.

4.3 Survivors can report domestic abuse to any member of our team at any time or use the FHA website.

#### **5. How FHA will recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse**

5.1 FHA will always take a survivor-centred approach to domestic abuse. This means that anyone, reporting domestic abuse to our housing services will be treated in a sensitive, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

5.2 We also recognise that people's understanding of domestic abuse may be influenced by their culture and beliefs and as a result, some people may not recognise themselves as a survivor of abuse. We will work sensitively with those experiencing abuse to promote their safety.

5.3 We will work to break down barriers that some communities may experience when reporting to us.

5.4 Ways we will help remove barriers to disclosure include (but are not limited to):

- Asking the survivor if they prefer to speak to someone of the same sex, if possible.
- Offering an interpreter if the survivor does not speak English. (We will not allow family or friends to interpret in abuse cases or cases which we think may involve abuse due to safety reasons.)
- Providing services in a way that considers a person's accessibility needs (e.g., larger print and easy to read documents).

5.5 We will support black and ethnic minority survivors and those with protected characteristics to access relevant information and support.

- 5.6 We will encourage tenants to report all incidents of threatened or actual domestic abuse and will offer a confidential service to ensure that those experiencing domestic abuse are given support and advice as appropriate to allow them to make choices about what to do next.
- 5.7 Tenants reporting domestic abuse, either directly or by way of a referral from another party, will be contacted within one working day and an action plan and associated risk assessment will be carried out and completed in partnership with relevant care provider, agreeing how best to meet their needs.
- 5.8 FHA will be guided by the tenant and appropriate professionals in determining the most appropriate course of action in responding to an incident of domestic abuse.
- 5.9 We will take appropriate enforcement action if there is sufficient evidence against anyone responsible for domestic abuse, however before doing so we will assess to ensure that acting will not compromise the safety of the victim.
- 5.10 It is not expected that employees will carry out any counselling but will be able to show empathy and signpost to specialist services.
- 5.11 FHA will always seek to support victims to remain in their homes if it is safe to do so. Where this is not the best outcome FHA will consider re-housing if they remain at risk in their current home. If a tenant is re-housed, their new tenancy will have the same security of tenure as previous tenancy.
- 5.12 Where damage has been caused to a property by the perpetrator, the tenant experiencing the abuse will be encouraged and supported where necessary, to report it to the police as criminal damage. FHA will then work with the police to take action against the perpetrator and to seek compensation for the costs of repair.
- 5.13 We will manage cases of domestic abuse in line with our safeguarding policies and procedures, and the Care Act 2014, where appropriate.
- 5.14 The Care Act 2014 sets out the specific safeguarding duties that apply to any adult who is 18 years or over who:
  - Has care and support needs.
  - Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect.
  - Is unable to protect themselves because of their care and support needs.
- 5.15 If a survivor of domestic abuse meets the criteria above, we will refer them to the relevant local authority safeguarding services.

## **6. Partnership Working**

- 6.1 We will work with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice to prevent and tackle domestic abuse while ensuring their safety. Working together is one of our key values for delivering an effective service.
- 6.2 We will maintain strong partnerships with local agencies and share information through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and with the police where necessary.
- 6.3 We will take appropriate enforcement action (where evidence is available) against anyone responsible for domestic abuse. This will only be done in cases where we can do so without compromising the safety of the victim. We will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action taken.
- 6.4 If required, we will work with partner agencies to provide improved security to a tenant's home.

## **7. Risk Management**

- 7.1 Responding appropriately to domestic abuse is a key responsibility for housing, care and support providers. FHA understand the risks posed to tenants due to domestic abuse and FHA will seek to mitigate risk through this policy.
- 7.2 When responding to any incident, we take a risk-based view to the actions being taken to ensure that the most appropriate action is taken, and the welfare and safety of tenants and staff are at the forefront.

## **8. GDPR and Data Protection**

- 8.1 Domestic abuse cases will be logged, managed and reported through our housing management system (SASSHA) and will be kept in line with GDPR and data protection policies and data retention schedules.
- 8.2 Data around domestic abuse will be captured and analysed in order that we can understand the scale of the issue and improve our services where required.

## **9. Learning and Development**

- 9.1 We will ensure relevant staff receive appropriate training, which will include the following:
  - Raising awareness and understanding among staff so they are able to recognise the signs of domestic abuse, particularly those linked to a tenant's housing circumstances.
  - Making tenants aware of appropriate support and advice available

regarding domestic abuse, including from third party organisations (appendix 1).

- Offer tenants affected by domestic abuse referrals to specialist domestic abuse agencies.
- Provide staff supporting tenants experiencing domestic abuse with appropriate specialist training.
- Offer appropriate staff members to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse.

## **10. Employees/ Line Managers**

10.1 FHA recognise that our staff may experience domestic abuse. FHA will not tolerate domestic abuse in any form and fully supports colleagues who experience domestic abuse. FHA is committed to supporting employees in making positive changes and to provide a safe and positive working environment.

10.2 FHA use the 4 R's approach to secure a clear response to Domestic Abuse.

10.3 Recognise - Domestic abuse is an issue that everyone can play a part in tackling. All FHA employees will complete the Domestic Abuse Awareness online training which includes a section called 'Understanding and Identifying Domestic Abuse'. It may be difficult to spot the signs of domestic abuse as it is often a 'hidden' crime. Some signs may include:

- uncharacteristically depressed, anxious, distracted, lacking in concentration, self-confidence or self-esteem
- changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason
- receiving repeated upsetting telephone calls/faxes/emails
- increased absenteeism or lateness and/or with unusual explanations
- repeatedly requiring time off for appointments
- excessive clothing
- repeated injuries or unexplained bruising
- accident prone
- unusual use of alcohol or other substances
- obsession with time
- avoiding lunch breaks or socialising outside work
- nervous on arrival and when leaving work
- reluctance to leave work at the end of the working day
- isolating themselves at work.

10.4 Respond – FHAs managers are approachable and available if an employee raises a domestic abuse matter with them. However, if a manager suspects that an employee is affected by domestic abuse, they can and should encourage them to discuss their concerns.

- 10.5 Talking about domestic abuse can be very difficult. If an employee raises an issue about domestic abuse with a manager or colleague, then this discussion and any subsequent discussions will be treated with confidentiality however it may not be able to be kept a secret for example if someone discloses information about significant harm towards a child or vulnerable adult, in this case you may need to share it as per the Safeguarding Policy.

When speaking with an employee who is disclosing domestic abuse managers should:

- Acknowledge the employee's courage and the difficulties they must be facing.
  - Use non-threatening questions to open conversations – examples could be: "How are you feeling?," "How are things in your life?"
  - Be prepared for the employee to be upset and tearful.
  - Not be judgmental and avoid language that indicates blame or fault ("Why don't you just leave?" / "How can you let this happen?" / "Why haven't you told anyone before?")
  - Allow plenty of time and space for the employee to explain matters.
  - Ensure the conversation is taking place in a confidential space and acknowledge that this may not be the case on video and phone calls if the employee is working from home. Other measures such as face to face meetings may need to be taken in these cases.
  - Be aware of the parameters of their role and make clear what they can and cannot provide.
  - Not give advice to the employee – for example do not pressurise them into leaving without seeking appropriate specialist advice as this can increase risk.
  - Signpost employees to appropriate onward support.
- 10.6 If an employee has made a disclosure of domestic abuse, it may be appropriate for a safety plan to be put in place, to do this the manager should ask the following questions:
- What support would the employee find helpful (there is no one-size-fits all)?
  - Does the perpetrator know where the employee works?
  - Does the perpetrator work for the same organisation?
  - Has the employee been followed on their way to/from work?
  - Is the employee experiencing abuse whilst they are at work i.e., is the perpetrator visiting the workplace?
  - Does the perpetrator have their work contact details i.e., a direct telephone number or email address?
  - Are they happy for information to be shared with colleagues to ensure any changes are implemented and a safe response can be coordinated?

10.7 Refer – Support available for victims is found in Appendix 1 of this policy. If any member of FHA believes an FHA employee and/or members of their family are in immediate danger they must call the police on 999.

10.8 Record - If an employee discloses abuse, the manager will record the details of what is said as accurately as possible. Should the abuse become subject to criminal proceedings, this is evidence and should be given to the police. The records should be held outside of official employee records.

## **11. Policy Monitoring and Review**

11.1 This policy will be reviewed periodically and at least every two years unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise.

## **12. Legislation and Guidance**

12.1 In setting policy and providing support to the survivors of domestic abuse, FHA will pay due regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including the following:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law)
- Police and Justice Act 2006 Domestic Violence Crime and Victim Act 2004 (S9 implemented in 2011)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Care Act 1996
- Housing Act 1996
- Children Act 1988
- Homeless Reduction Act 2018
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015 (S 76)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing 2014
- Protection of Freedom Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Homeless Act 2002
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024
- [Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Domestic Abuse: a toolkit for employers - Guide For Employers \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)
- [Consumer standards Code of Practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or following changes to regulations and guidance or organisational learning.			This policy will be reviewed by the Property Asset Manager.	
<b>Version Control</b>				
Version	Date document created and approved	Previous review date	Next review date	Owner
V2	04/07/2024	09/10/2024	31/11/2026	Zoe Hartley – Property Asset Manager
Amendments				
<p>Date: 09/10/2024</p> <p>Amendment: Extensive updates to reflect the new consumer standards, guidance and organisational learning.</p> <p>Section 10 for employees and line managers added.</p>				

## Appendix 1 – Support Available for Victims

- 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline (England) – run by Refuge, freephone: 0808 2000 247. British Sign Language access from 10am – 6pm on weekdays. The website offers a live chat service between 3pm – 10pm on weekdays.
- Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse – an organisation that supports those who have lost a family member (or friend) through fatal domestic abuse.
- Age UK – an organisation that supports older people and victims of elder abuse.
- Ask for ANI – a codeword scheme for victims to access support from the safety of their local pharmacy.
- Broken Rites – a group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy, ministers, and Church Army Officers.
- Childline – a free 24-hour service providing support for anyone under 19 in the UK, 0800 1111.
- Clinks – an organisation that supports the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families. Clinks have a directory of services, although it is not exhaustive, and are experienced in supporting women who have suffered domestic abuse.
- Dogs Trust Freedom Project – a specialist dog fostering service for victims fleeing domestic abuse.
- Galop – a specialist organisation and LGBT anti-violence charity offering support to LGBT victims.
- Hestia Respond to Abuse Advice Line – a specialist advice line supporting employers to help staff experiencing domestic abuse on 0203 879 3695 or via email [Adviceline.EB@hestia.org](mailto:Adviceline.EB@hestia.org). 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.
- HM Prison and Probation Service Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service – a service for victims to contact HMPPS to report unwanted letters, phone calls, texts or messages from a prisoner or to proactively seek to stop contact. You may access the service by completing the form on Gov.uk using the link [gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact](https://www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact) (24 hr access) or call 03000606699 or via email [unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk](mailto:unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk) Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm. The Unwanted 147 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance Prisoner Contact service also offers victims the opportunity to contact HMPPS to raise concerns about a prisoner being released.
- Hourglass – a specialist organisation aiming to end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK. Their helpline can be accessed by phone on 0808 808 8141, text on 07860 052906 or email [helpline@wearehourglass.org](mailto:helpline@wearehourglass.org).
- Karma Nirvana ‘Honour’-Based Abuse helpline – a specialist organisation supporting victims of ‘honour’-based abuse and forced marriage. Their helpline is 0800 599 9247 and is open 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- Loving Me – a specialist organisation providing one-to-one online support and advocacy for high risk Transgender, Gender Queer and Non-Binary victims of domestic abuse.
- ManKind Initiative – a specialist organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- Men’s Advice Line – run by Respect. 0808 801 0327 open Monday to Friday 9am

- 8pm or email [info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk)
- Muslim Women’s Network – a specialist organisation supporting Muslim women and girls.
- National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse helpline – 0800 999 5428 Monday to Friday 10am - 5pm.
- National Stalking helpline – run by Suzy Lamplugh Trust. 0808 802 0300 9.30am - 4pm Monday to Friday.
- NSPCC FGM helpline – 0800 028 3550.
- Paladin – an organisation that provides support for victims of stalking.
- Rape Crisis England and Wales – an organisation representing rape crisis centres across England and Wales which provide support for women and girls of all ages who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Their telephone number is 0808 802 9999. Their website also offers a Live Chat service.
- Refuge – an organisation operated by an all female staff that provides support for all victims of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
- Respect – an organisation that works with male victims of domestic abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators. Respect operates the Men’s Advice line, a confidential helping for male victims of domestic abuse and the Respect Phoneline for domestic abuse perpetrators and those supporting them.
- Restored – a specialist organisation working to tackle domestic abuse by partnering with churches and Christian organisations.
- Revenge Porn helpline – open between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. 0345 600 0459 or [help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk](mailto:help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk).
- Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) – centres providing medical, practical and emotional support to all victims of sexual assault.
- Sign Health Domestic Abuse Service – a specialist domestic abuse service to support the health and wellbeing of deaf people.
- Sikh Women’s Aid – an organisation providing support for Sikh women and girls.
- Southall Black Sisters – an organisation providing support for ethnic minority victims and migrant women. Their helpline is 020 8571 9595 and is open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.
- Stay Safe East – a specialist organisation providing support for deaf and disabled victims of domestic abuse across London. Referrals should be made to [enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk).
- Surviving Economic Abuse – a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting victims of economic abuse, working in partnership with Money Advice Plus to provide money and debt advice to victims experiencing financial difficulties.
- UK Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) – a government policy unit leading on forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. FMU operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims and potential victims of forced marriage. 020 7008 0151.
- Victim Support – a specialist service helping anyone affected by any types of crime, not only those who experience it directly, but also their friends, family and any other people involved.
- Women’s Aid Federation England (WAFE) – an organisation supporting women affected by domestic abuse. Their website offers a Live Chat service available



Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 6pm. Women's Aid also provide a directory, listing local support services across the UK, although it is not exhaustive it is updated regularly.