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# Domestic Abuse Policy

<b>Date Last Approved</b>	<b>8 December 2025</b>
<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>31 December 2028</b>
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Temi Awolaja, Head of Housing Services</b>
<b>Applies to</b>	<b>General Needs social tenanted and leaseholders</b>

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This policy sets out CDS's commitment to preventing, responding to, and reducing harm caused by domestic abuse. CDS recognises that domestic abuse has a devastating and long-term impact on victims, children, families and communities.
- 1.2 We believe that every resident has the right to live free from fear, violence, coercion and control. Domestic abuse is unacceptable in any circumstances, and we take all reports and disclosures seriously, responding sensitively and promptly.
- 1.3 CDS adopts a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach, prioritising safety, choice and empowerment. We will support residents who are victims of domestic abuse to access advice, specialist support, and safe accommodation. We will work with relevant external agencies to hold perpetrators accountable without compromising the safety of the individual experiencing the abuse.
- 1.4 In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, CDS recognises that children who see, hear or experience domestic abuse are victims in their own right.
- 1.5 CDS is committed to complying with all relevant, legal, regulatory, and safeguarding requirements. We will work collaboratively with local authorities, the police, specialist services, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), and other relevant agencies to ensure a coordinated and effective response to domestic abuse.

## 2 Scope of the policy

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- 2.1 This policy applies to all CDS residents and their household members, including leaseholders. It also applies to CDS staff and contractors who may witness or receive disclosures of domestic abuse during their duties. It does not apply to properties owned by clients, but clients may choose to adopt this policy as their own.

- 2.2 We will meet our statutory safeguarding requirements in line with our existing policies and procedures where there are safeguarding concerns about a vulnerable resident or customer. In all cases of domestic abuse, staff will refer to CDS's Safeguarding policy.
- 2.3 This policy supports compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the revised Consumer Standards, including the Safety and Quality Standard and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

### 3 Definitions

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- 3.1 CDS has adopted the statutory definition of domestic abuse contained within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

- 3.2 **Domestic abuse** is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 who are personally connected, including partners, ex-partners, relatives and individuals who have parental responsibility for the same child. The abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, Emotional or other abuse like tech facilitated abuse /digital abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act confirms that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear, or experience its effects.

- 3.3 **Physical abuse** includes hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking, murder.
- 3.4 **Sexual abuse** is any unwanted sexual activity.
- 3.5 **Violence or threatening behaviours** are behaviours that frightens, intimidates or threatens harm.
- 3.6 **Controlling or coercive behaviour** is behaviour designed to make a person dependant, isolated, or regulated including monitoring movements, communication or social contact, manipulation, humiliation or intimidation, digital /online cohesive control such as monitoring phone or social media use, tracking location via apps and online harassment or intimidation.
- 3.7 **Economic abuse** includes controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, controlling digital payments and subscriptions, destroying property or withholding essentials, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow the victim to study or work.
- 3.8 **Psychological, emotional or other abuse** is behaviour intended to cause emotional harm, fear or distress, verbal abuse, intimidation, isolation, humiliation, Cyber-bullying or online harassment.

- 3.9 **Coercive behaviour** is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim. This includes forced marriages and so called “honour violence”.
- 3.10 Includes post-separation abuse as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 3.11 Domestic abuse is unacceptable regardless of gender, sexuality, culture, disability, or any other Characteristic.

## 4 What residents can do to get help and support

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- 4.1 Residents can report domestic abuse to any CDS staff member, the police and their local council. Residents may also report concerns via alternative safe contact methods, including email, third-party advocacy organisations, or anonymous enquiries.
- 4.2 We recognise that leaving an abusive situation is difficult. CDS will respect the resident’s choices and will never pressure someone to take action they are not ready to. Help is available and we will support residents in every way we can.
- 4.3 Apart from contacting CDS, the police or their local council, residents can also seek help and support from several other agencies – *see the list in appendix 1*.
- 4.4 All the agencies listed in appendix 1 will prioritise residents’ safety and confidentiality. They will help the resident explore their options and think about what decision they want to make.
- 4.5 Residents should always dial 999 in an emergency. If unable to speak, they can use the Silent Solution by pressing 55. The police have statutory duties to protect and support victims.
- 4.6 We recommend that residents experiencing domestic abuse get their own legal advice. This is particularly important for housing advice if they have a joint tenancy or are a joint homeowner with the person who is abusing them. Legal aid may be available for victims of domestic abuse.
- 4.7 Residents have the right to request information about a partner’s history of abusive behaviour under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law).

## 5 What CDS can do to help residents experiencing domestic abuse

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- 5.1 When we receive a report or disclosure of an incident of domestic abuse, we will contact the resident **within one working day** to discuss the options available to them.
- 5.2 All members of staff will treat any disclosure of domestic abuse and subsequent cases sensitively, sympathetically and in a non-judgemental manner in accordance with the individual’s needs.
- 5.3 We will treat all information related to domestic abuse confidentially as far as reasonably possible (see section 13).

- 5.4 Housing Officers and the leasehold adviser will usually be the first point of contact when reporting domestic violence or abuse.
- 5.5 CDS will signpost the individual experiencing domestic violence or abuse to relevant organisations to provide advice and support as appropriate
- 5.6 We will agree the method of contact that the individual wishes us to use to stay in contact with them. People experiencing domestic abuse can meet staff in confidence at an agreed choice of safe venue.
- 5.7 We will endeavour to provide improved security, where required, to a resident's home in conjunction with partner agencies, including target-hardening measures where appropriate.
- 5.8 We will make a referral to our internal Welfare Benefit Advisor for any required support relating to financial issues.
- 5.8.1 CDS will ensure that survivors are not penalised for rent arrears or tenancy breaches that result directly from domestic abuse.
- 5.8.2 CDS will support residents to remain safely in their home wherever possible, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act.
- 5.9 We will agree an action plan with the person experiencing domestic abuse, monitor the situation and review at a frequency agreed with them.
- 5.10 We will report incidents to the police on behalf of individuals or support them in doing so (with their permission), where they feel too intimidated to report incidents themselves.
- 5.11 If we believe there is a safeguarding concern of an adult at risk or a child at risk living in the property where domestic violence abuse is taking place, we have a duty of care to raise this concern with Social Services. We will work in partnership with external organisations to support and assist people who are experiencing or have previous experience of domestic abuse and violence.
- 5.12 Although CDS has no provision for emergency or temporary housing, we will support residents' application in accessing the local authority's homelessness services and may facilitate management or reciprocal moves where it is appropriate to do so.
- 5.13 Residents will be directed to seek independent legal advice on all tenancy matters, including the termination of joint tenancies and any applicable changes to tenancy status.
- 5.14 When dealing with domestic abuse, full consideration will be given to our safeguarding responsibilities, details of which are included in the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy.
- 5.15 We recognise that supporting residents affected by domestic abuse can be difficult for staff, and we will ensure staff working on domestic abuse cases are supported.

## 6 Responding to perpetrators

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- 6.1 CDS will work with residents experiencing abuse to seek appropriate solutions for perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent the abuse recurring.
- 6.2 CDS will seek to provide support to perpetrators of domestic abuse by providing general housing advice, when requested. Where the perpetrator is willing to address their behaviour, we will refer them to appropriate support services.
- 6.3 CDS will adopt a multi-agency approach in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence against its residents. This will include working with the police and the appropriate local authority departments and other organisations and agencies as required.
- 6.4 There are a number of possible offences for which perpetrators could be prosecuted depending on the specific acts, ranging from murder, rape and manslaughter through to assault, harassment and threatening behaviour, stalking, criminal damage, coercive control etc.
- 6.5 Domestic abuse is a breach of the Tenancy Agreement. CDS will consider enforcement action with the consent of the victim(s) or when it is felt it is proportionate and reasonable, just and convenient or if the perpetrator's behaviour is capable of causing a nuisance or annoyance to surrounding residents.
- 6.6 The enforcement action taken against perpetrators (where evidence is available) will depend upon the individual circumstances. This will only be done in cases where we can do so without compromising the safety of the individual, and we will work closely with partner agencies in respect of any action taken.
- 6.7 The actions taken may include:
- Possession proceedings, where evidence supports this, and it is safe and proportionate.
  - Injunctions and exclusion orders
  - Issuing warnings to enforce tenancy conditions
  - Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 6.8 Action may be taken with or without the victim's consent if there is imminent or serious risk of harm.

## 7 Legal Remedies for victims

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- 7.1 Victims of domestic violence or abuse can apply for any of the following:
- **Occupation order** - the order controls who stays at the family home, who can return and who should be excluded.

- **Non-molestation order** – can protect a person and any relevant child from violence or harassment. A person can obtain a non-molestation order against someone who has not been physically violent, but has been harassing, intimidating or pestering them.
- **Restraining order** – made when there is a need for the order to protect a named person or persons from harassment or conduct that will put them in fear of violence.
- **Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs)** can prevent a perpetrator from contacting or approaching the victim and can include positive requirements, such as attending behaviour-change programmes. This replaced the Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Under the Victims' Code, residents have specific rights to protection, support and information throughout the justice process.

7.2 Specialist domestic abuse support agencies can provide advice of solicitors with experience in family law to help residents experiencing domestic abuse apply for one of the above orders (*refer to appendix 1 – support agencies*).

## 8 Multi agency working

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- 8.1 Domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation, and we acknowledge that dealing with issues of domestic abuse requires a co-ordinated partnership approach.
- 8.2 CDS will endeavour to engage in good practice and work with all relevant agencies when dealing with domestic abuse, such as making referrals to MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences). CDS will also cooperate with local domestic abuse partnerships established under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 8.3 **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** – A MARAC is a meeting which combines up-to-date information-sharing with a comprehensive assessment of a victim's needs, and links these directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in the case; victim, children and perpetrator.
- Only people identified as high risk are referred to MARAC. It includes a domestic abuse specialist (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor - IDVA), police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies.
  - Referrals can be made to a local MARAC by any frontline agency representative that undertakes a risk assessment with a victim and thereby determines that their case meets the high-risk threshold.
- 8.4 Any referrals to MARAC will be made after discussion with, and consent from, the victim. However, if consent is not granted and there is an immediate or potential risk to the victim or children, a referral may be made without consent in line with safeguarding legislation.
- 8.5 Referral is based on:
- **Professional judgement** - a staff member can make a referral based on their professional judgement

- **Escalation** - any agency can make a referral based on escalation (the number of police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic violence in the past 12 months)
  - **Visible high risk** - when a victim is assessed with a score of 14 or above using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Violence risk assessment checklist (DASH) - a tool created for the police and non-police agencies when identifying and assessing victims of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour based violence).
- 8.6 The purpose of the DASH risk checklist is to give a consistent and simple tool to practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse in order to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk.
- 8.7 The DASH checklist can be found on the SafeLives website at [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk) (the UK wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse for everyone).
- 8.8 When making a referral, staff should complete a MARAC referral form and send via secure means to the relevant MARAC, not to SafeLives.
- 8.9 Staff can also contact the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) for the local authority where the victim lives for advice in relation to MARAC / cases of domestic abuse.
- 8.10 All MARAC referrals and outcomes will be recorded appropriately and monitored for follow-up action.

## 9 Training and awareness

- 9.1 Training will be provided to staff annually and more frequently where required to ensure they can deal appropriately and confidently with a disclosure. CDS will also support any staff member adversely affected by dealing with any incidents of domestic abuse as part of our approach to staff welfare. Training will include:
- Trauma-informed practice
  - Safety enquiry
  - Coercive control
  - DASH risk assessment
  - Modern slavery indicators
  - Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
  - Housing Ombudsman expectations on domestic abuse responses
- 9.2 **Escalation**  
If a staff member is unsure about action or risk, they must consult their line manager immediately
- 9.3 High-risk or complex cases must be escalated without delay.

## **10 Residents' right to appeal**

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- 10.1 If a resident is dissatisfied with our response in tackling domestic violence or abuse, they can make a complaint via the CDS Complaints Policy. Residents also have the right to escalate complaints to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## **11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

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- 11.1 Domestic violence or abuse can be traumatic for everyone involved. CDS will ensure this policy is applied fairly and consistently and will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group in line with equality laws and principles.
- 11.2 We will act sensitively toward the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action or make reasonable adjustments, where appropriate.

## **12 Monitoring and continuous improvement**

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- 12.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner where legislation requires.
- 12.2 Reports to the Services Committee will include analysis of trends, risk levels, response times and compliance with regulatory standards.

## **13 Confidentiality**

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- 13.1 CDS will collect and process data in line with our current Data Protection Policy, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- 13.2 All information regarding disclosures and reports of domestic abuse will be treated with confidence and will only be passed to external agencies with prior consent. We will protect the identity of the victim or witness, observing general data protection regulation (GDPR) and information sharing agreements.
- 13.3 Personal information may be shared without consent where necessary to protect a child or vulnerable adult, prevent serious harm, or fulfil a legal or safeguarding obligation.
- 13.4 CDS is committed to working in partnership with the police, social services, and other relevant organisations in accordance with their local procedures and information sharing protocols. This is essential to enable these organisations to carry out their statutory duties to investigate concerns and protect vulnerable people.

## **14 Legislation, guidance and standards**

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- 14.1 This policy takes into account the following legislation, and staff are encouraged to refer to these, where required:



- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)
- The Care Act 2014
- Family Law Act 1996
- Housing Acts 1985 & 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from harassment Act 1997
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- The Victims Code 2020
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) framework
- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) standards
- SafeLives and CIH good practice

## 15 Associated policies and procedures

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15.1 The following procedures are associated with this policy:

- ASB Procedure
- Allocation Sign up / lettings procedure

15.2 The policy is supported by:

- Allocations policy
- Complaints policy
- Data protection policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy
- ASB policy
- Lone working policy
- Repairs Policy

### Version control

Date	Amendment	Version control
22/11/2021	Creation of policy	V1.0
8/12/2025	Review and Board approval	V1.1

## Appendix 1- support agencies

In an emergency, always dial 999 and ask for the police. If you can't speak and are calling on a mobile, press 55 to have your call transferred to the police.

The following agencies offer specialist support via helplines and/or email:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
<b>Refuge's National Domestic Abuse helpline</b>	0808 2000 247. Free at any time, day or night  Email: <a href="mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk">helpline@womensaid.org.uk</a>  You can access the <a href="#">Women's Aid live chat service</a> 7 days a week, 10am to 6pm.
<b>Respect Men's Advice Line</b>	0808 801 0327 or visit the webchat at <a href="#">Men's Advice Line</a>
<b>Mankind (men)</b>	0182 3334 244 – Monday to Friday, (10 am to 4 pm)
<b>Victim Support</b> For free and confidential support for anyone affected by a crime.	0808 1689 111 Free 24/7 support line  <a href="#">live chat service</a>  <a href="#">My Support Space - free online resource</a>
<b>SignHealth</b> Provides advice and support for Deaf adults and young people experiencing domestic abuse	Text ONLY <a href="tel:07800003421">07800 003421</a> Email: <a href="mailto:da@signhealth.org.uk">da@signhealth.org.uk</a>
<b>Rights of Women</b> Free legal advice and have online guidance on issues such as: immigration and asylum, child contact arrangements and criminal law.	020 7251 6577 for national family law advice line Tuesday to Thursday: 7pm – 9pm; Friday 12pm – 2 pm  020 7608 1137 for London family law advice line Monday 10am – 12 pm, 2pm -4pm Tuesday to Wednesday 2pm – 4pm Thursday 10am-12pm and 2 pm-4pm  020 7251 8887 for criminal law Tuesday 10am – 12 pm and Thursday 7pm - 9pm  020 7490 7689 for immigration and asylum law Mondays and Thursdays -10am -12 pm and 2 pm – 4 pm

<b>National Sexual Violence Helpline</b>	0808 500 2222
<b>Beyond the streets</b> Provide outreach support to women involved in prostitution.	0800 133 7870 Email: support@beyondthestreets.org.uk
<b>Galop</b> For LGBT+ people who have experienced or are experiencing abuse.	0800 999 5428 Email: help@galop.org.uk
<b>Karma Nirvana</b> Supports those at risk of 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage	0800 5999 247 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5 pm) Email: support@karmanirvana.org.uk
<b>GOV.UK Forced Marriage Unit</b>	020 7008 0151 Email: <a href="mailto:fm@fcdo.gov.uk">fm@fcdo.gov.uk</a>
<b>National Stalking Helpline</b> For those experiencing stalking or harassment	0808 802 0300
<b>Modern Slavery Helpline</b> If you believe that someone is being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation	08000 121 7000
<b>Hourglass</b> <b>Can provide information and support to older people or anyone concerned about an older person, including those at risk of or experiencing abuse.</b>  <a href="http://www.wearehourglass.org">www.wearehourglass.org</a>	0808 808 8141 or text 07860 052 906 Email: helpline@wearehourglass.org

There are other agencies which can offer specialist support and advice via their website, including:

<b>Surviving Economic Abuse</b> If you are experiencing economic abuse, Surviving Economic Abuse has practical advice, run by Money Advice.	<a href="http://survivingeconomicabuse.org">survivingeconomicabuse.org</a>  0808 196 8845
<b>Hestia</b>  Provides domestic abuse refuges for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. They provide emotional and practical support and ensures that every woman they support has an up-to-date risk assessment and support plan tailored to their needs.	<a href="http://www.hestia.org">www.hestia.org</a>  <b><u>Hestia's Refuge Referral Line</u> on 0808 169 9975</b>  <a href="mailto:refuge.space@hestia.org">refuge.space@hestia.org</a>

<p><b>Imkaan</b></p> <p>Provide an up-to-date list of specialist services across the country which are run by Black and minoritized women, for Black and minoritized women experiencing violence and abuse. Please note Imkaan do not offer support themselves.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.imkaan.org.uk">www.imkaan.org.uk</a></p> <p>Tel number: 020 7842 8525</p>
<p><b>Safe Spaces</b></p> <p>Safes Spaces are safe, confidential rooms where victims can take some time to reflect, access information on specialist support services or call friends or family.</p>	<p><a href="#">Safe Spaces</a> are also available in Boots, Morrisons, Superdrug and Well pharmacies, TSB banks and independent pharmacies across the UK.</p> <p>Find your <a href="#">nearest Safe Space</a>.</p>

**National Centre of Domestic Violence**

**Works in close partnership with the police, solicitors and other support agencies to help victims obtain protection. A free fast emergency injunction service for survivors of domestic abuse and violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race or sexual orientation.**

**0800 970 2070**

**TEXT NCDV to 60777**

**Email: [office@ncdv.org.uk](mailto:office@ncdv.org.uk)**