



# Domestic Abuse Policy

## February 2022

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<b><u>Version No.</u></b>	<b><u>Purpose/Changes</u></b>	<b><u>Approval Date</u></b>	<b><u>Approved By</u></b>	<b><u>Suggested Review Date</u></b>
V4.0	Compliance review	09/02/2022	ELT	February 2025
V3.0	Full Review	13/01/2021	ELT	January 2022
V2.0	Health Check	02/03/2017	Heads of Service	February 2020
V1.0	New Policy	25/02/2016	Ongo Partnership Board	February 2017

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## **1. Our policy is...**

- 1.1 To commit to the principle that domestic abuse is unacceptable behaviour and that everyone has a right to live free from fear and abuse.
- 1.2 At Ongo, we have signed up to the Make a Stand against domestic abuse pledge with the Chartered Institute of Housing and comply with four focussed commitments:
  - Have a policy in place that supports residents
  - Have a policy in place that supports colleagues
  - Make information available about support services available to colleagues and residents
  - Have a Senior Manager appointed as a champion who leads on the activity we are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse

## **2. It applies to...**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all colleagues, tenants and customers.
- 2.2 This policy applies to contractors carrying out work on our behalf. Where incidents are witnessed or there are suspicions of domestic abuse, it should always be reported.
- 2.3 This policy covers identifying domestic abuse, ensuring information and support is available to anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and the importance of confidentiality and effective partnership working.
- 2.4 Some aspects of the policy specifically relate to Ongo Homes and its role as a landlord.

## **3. Because we want to...**

- Be clear on our approach to domestic abuse
- Participate in a **multi-agency** approach to dealing with instances of domestic abuse and will work with our partners and other agencies to ensure the best outcome for individuals experiencing domestic abuse
- Ensure this policy supports the relevant conditions in the Ongo Homes tenancy agreements
- Send a clear message to perpetrators that we do not condone any form of domestic abuse and, where possible, we will take appropriate action against perpetrators working with partners to reduce or manage the risks around domestic abuse
- Encourage our colleagues who have experienced domestic abuse to come forward and know they will be supported

## **4. We will...**

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Domestic Abuse as

*The behaviour of a person towards another person if they are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive. Behaviour is abusive is it consists of any of the following:*

- *Physical or sexual abuse*
- *Violent or threatening behaviour*
- *Controlling or coercive behaviour*
- *Economic abuse*
- *Psychological, emotional or other abuse*

*It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.*

*Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on the victim's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or, obtain goods or services.*

- 4.2 We accept that for many individuals it can take repeated incidents before they seek support, however, we believe that each incidence of domestic abuse is a serious matter and we will fully support the individual with each instance reported.
- 4.3 We know that any individual can experience domestic abuse, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or living arrangements. Domestic abuse can occur between anyone in a close personal relationship. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. All individuals experiencing domestic abuse will be provided with a fair, person-centred, confidential and consistent level of service within the constraints of current legislation and the resources available to us.
- 4.4 If our colleagues are experiencing domestic abuse, we will provide support in a sensitive and confidential way.
- 4.5 To recognise the impact that domestic abuse can have on the family and household, and to take account of this when taking action in relation to Ongo Homes tenancies. We are committed to delivering a service that will protect our residents and their families from harm.
- 4.6 We will make sure our colleagues are appropriately trained so they:
- Can understand domestic abuse and the effect it can have on the individual experiencing domestic abuse
  - Have the right skills to identify where domestic abuse may be occurring and what action to take, in line with our procedure and guidance
  - Understand the importance of seeking the victim's approval if referring to partner agencies (unless a specific Safeguarding issue is evident)
  - Can identify and assess any health & safety risks arising from domestic abuse cases and follow health & safety and lone working guidance at all times
- 4.7 We will always:
- Treat anyone experiencing domestic abuse with dignity and respect

- Look at each case individually and provide the relevant and appropriate support, advice and guidance within our remit or signpost to our partners or other agencies
- Deal sensitively, quickly and effectively with all reports of domestic abuse
- Respect confidentiality from the outset - although we will refer to a relevant agency without consent as required under s115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 where an individual is at risk
- Make sure our colleagues are aware of the referral care pathway for all those experiencing domestic abuse so they know what support and advice is available

#### **4.8 Working in partnership**

4.8.1 We fully recognise that colleagues from other agencies can provide the wide range of measures, support and protection to those experiencing domestic abuse. We will work with a range of partner agencies so they can provide expertise around domestic abuse, including attending multi-agency meetings where required to help reduce the risk of serious harm or homicide of an individual experiencing domestic abuse.

4.9 Colleagues will be supported by the organisation to seek help, support and information in respect of domestic abuse.

### **5. Making sure we do what we say...**

5.1 The Tenancy Services Manager will monitor the impact of this policy to ensure appropriate and consistent application.

5.2 Training and awareness will be provided to all colleagues at the right level and in the right way with refresh training provided as appropriate to reinforce the importance of recognising domestic abuse, reporting and relevant action to be taken in respect of domestic abuse.

### **6. Other things to bear in mind...**

6.1 Our policies and procedures related to:

- Safeguarding Policy & Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality & Diversity
- Local Authority Choice Based Lettings Policies
- Lettings Exceptions Procedure

6.2 Chartered Institute of Housing Make a Stand Domestic Abuse Pledge.

6.3 Local Authority Domestic Abuse Strategies.

6.4 Appropriate operating protocols from other agencies and partners.

6.5 Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse (produced by the CIPD with the Equality & Human Rights Commission).

6.6 The main pieces of legislation and regulation relevant to this policy are:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Crime and Security Act 2010
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Family Law Act 1996
- Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002
- Protection from Harassment Act 2007
- Protection from Freedoms Act 2012
- Clare’s Law – Domestic violence disclosure scheme

## 7. We’ll look at this again...

7.1 Every three years unless something changes and we need to review it sooner.

## 8. What we mean...

<p>CIH Make a Stand Pledge</p>	<p>The four focused commitments that form the CIH Make a Stand Pledge to provide support for individuals experiencing domestic abuse are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse</li> <li>➤ Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on our website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and colleagues</li> <li>➤ Put in place a HR policy or amend an existing policy, to support colleagues who may be experiencing domestic abuse</li> <li>➤ Appoint a champion at senior level in your organisation to own the activity that you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse</li> </ul>
<p>Controlling Behaviour</p>	<p>Controlling behaviour is 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.</p>
<p>Coercive Behaviour</p>	<p>Coercive control is an 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. This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called</p>

	<p>'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that people who may experience such are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.</p>
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