

## Domestic abuse policy

### Introduction

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse (see below)
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; and 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 B’s ability to:

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services.

For the purposes of this Act, A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

Children are also recognised as victims/survivors of domestic abuse and this definition includes forced marriages and Honour Based Abuse. See Appendix A for the full definition.

### 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 experiencing 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 experiencing domestic abuse, we will co-ordinate a multi-agency/departmental approach to provide as much support as possible to assist the customer in living safely. It is recognised that domestic abuse is widespread, traditionally underreported and can happen in any household.

Grand Union will consider taking action to evict the perpetrators of domestic abuse using the powers available under the Housing Act 2004 and other relevant

legislation.

## Objectives

Fundamentally, our primary objective is to provide safe homes and communities for all our customers. People experiencing domestic abuse will be treated in an empathetic, supportive and non-judgemental way. We operate a survivor-centred approach and a survivor's disclosure alone is sufficient for them to be given advice and assistance as a matter of priority.

We aim to:

**Get our response right first time** by ensuring all colleagues have the knowledge to respond correctly to survivors of domestic abuse and save lives.

**Take a survivor-centred approach** in responding to, and encouraging, those experiencing domestic abuse, to report it and be confident that complaints will be treated seriously, sympathetically and in confidence.

**Complete specialist referrals.** Domestic Abuse is regarded as a gendered crime which disproportionately affects women and perpetrated by men. We recognise that domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of:

Age  
Gender  
Sexuality  
Ethnicity  
Religion  
Disability  
Economic status

Some victims/survivors may experience overlapping forms of discrimination through different aspects of their identity, for example, through their sexual orientation or beliefs. By taking a whole person approach, we aim to provide equal support through specialist referrals and remain responsive in removing barriers to accessing support or reporting abuse.

**Adopt a proactive multi-agency approach** with all essential agencies, working together to ensure the safety of those suffering from domestic abuse.

**Be flexible in our approach** in responding to incidents of domestic abuse, taking into account the varying circumstances of survivors, and the differing courses of action that are available and appropriate that they may wish to take to end the abuse.

**Keep consistent, accurate and relevant records,** to ensure that the victim/survivor does not have to constantly repeat the same information which may need agreement to be shared with other agencies.

**Assist and guide survivors to obtain support,** providing advice to survivors, and working with stakeholders. In holding perpetrators to account, we will always ensure we take into consideration the wishes of the victim/survivor and their family of any action taken. We will signpost victims/survivors to access legal support such as Clare's Law disclosure scheme and support to apply for Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme or obtain Non-Molestation Orders.

**Safeguarding** – our approach is to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and children who are experiencing or are at risk from abuse or neglect by completing safeguarding referrals that have recognised links to domestic abuse, acting in line with our safeguarding policies and procedures.

**Stay safe at home** – we act on the principle that a survivor of abuse should not have to leave their home unless they choose to. Where the survivor wishes to remain in their home and maintain the support of local family or friends, we will consider additional security. This could include using legal tools to remove the person causing harm from the property, installing panic alarms and seeking police advice/support on further adjustments required to increase the security to the property.

**Assist survivors to find alternative accommodation** – if it is not possible for the survivor to stay safe at home, we will support their decision to move including discussing options of temporary accommodation and refuge accommodation. Where possible we will liaise with other housing providers to ensure the survivor moves as quickly as possible to a safe property with the same tenancy tenure.

**When safe, support survivors to fulfil their aspirations** by ensuring relevant support is provided to continue to live well. This could include, counselling, therapeutic and group programmes, access to training and employment advice.

**Perpetrator management** – we will seek to hold persons causing harm/perpetrators accountable and to engage with those who recognise and seek to change their behaviour. Where necessary, we will take a coordinated community response to stop persons causing harm and ensure that they are held accountable:

- Through the courts, including asking the police to prosecute for criminal damage.
- By sharing information with MARAC and other agencies to enhance safety for victims/survivors.
- If necessary, utilising powers under the Housing Act or seek a court order to gain possession where a survivor has left the property as a result of domestic abuse and where the person causing harm/perpetrator remains.
- By considering and supporting other housing aspects of those causing harm/perpetrators including homelessness, housing applications and other support for rehoming.
- By reviewing the tenure as domestic abuse is a breach of tenancy.

Support will be given to person causing harm/perpetrators who recognise their behaviour is harmful and wish to change this through signposting and partnership working; this includes referrals to local Change programmes.

**Publicise and promote** a clear message through our website, social media, neighbourhood news, and information displayed in communal areas, that we will not tolerate domestic abuse and will try to reach out to survivors who experience barriers to reporting or accessing services. We will promote campaigns and educational interventions ensuring they are Respect accredited.

**Ensure that all colleagues and partnering contractors** undertake training to understand domestic abuse and enable them to respond appropriately. If they see or feel that ‘something is not quite right’ they must report it to the appropriate person.

**Colleague safety** – a separate domestic abuse policy for Grand Union colleagues can be referred to in the event of instances of abuse relating to Grand Union colleagues.

All Grand Union colleagues are expected to work within the procedures that accompany this policy.

### **Points of contact within Grand Union**

All colleagues will receive training for Domestic Abuse appropriate to their role and will be equipped with the knowledge to report or respond to Domestic Abuse concerns. The Domestic Abuse & Safeguarding team will lead and oversee our response to domestic abuse.

Grand Union Domestic Abuse Responders will have the knowledge to provide colleagues with support and advice on managing domestic abuse cases.

### **Other related policies**

- Allocations Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Customer Care Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Safeguarding from Abuse Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Tenancy Changes Policy
- Translation Policy
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### **Other related documents**

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- 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)
- Housing Act 2004
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

### **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 as well as the increase of abuse within familial relationships including honour-based abuse and forced marriages. We recognise that all abuse must be addressed and the appropriate support offered to survivors 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 by strengthening partnerships with other local and national by-and-for services and signpost accordingly.

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 AdvicePro and related documentation saved on SharePoint and remain confidential. Information sharing is necessary where other agencies and teams are involved to ensure a whole person approach to support.

### **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 survivors and safeguarding adults, the two have developed separate professional practices.

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.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

Appeals and complaints will be dealt with through our Customer Feedback procedure.

### **Action plan**

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

### **Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed every three years unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise, to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

<b>Person responsible for review:</b>	Director of Wellbeing & Safeguarding
<b>Supported by:</b>	Partnerships, DA & Safeguarding Manager
<b>Ratified by:</b>	Customer Experience Committee July 2023
<b>Date policy reviewed:</b>	June 2023
<b>Date of next review:</b>	June 2026

## **Appendix A - Statutory definition of domestic abuse**

### **Psychological and emotional abuse**

Has a profound impact upon survivors and their children. It can leave a survivor 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.

### **Economic abuse**

Involves behaviours that interfere with an individual's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can be controlling or coercive. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety.

Examples of economic abuse include:

- having sole control of the family income
- preventing a survivor from claiming welfare benefits
- interfering with a survivor's education, training, or employment
- not allowing or controlling a survivor's access to mobile phone/transport/utilities/food
- damage to a survivor's property

### **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 survivor'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 the survivor.

**Family and inter-generational abuse including elder abuse**

Grand Union 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 survivor's teenage or adult sibling, child or grandchild.