



DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Domestic Abuse Policy			
Last Reviewed	June 2026	Next Review	June 2028
Responsible Officer	Chief Operations Officer		

Policy Statement: Freebridge believes that everyone has the right to live without fear or threat of abuse from a partner, former partner or household member. We are committed to accessing and providing support to victims of domestic abuse. We want to raise awareness of domestic abuse, provide prompt and sensitive services to victims, and work closely with other agencies to achieve best outcomes for individuals and their dependents. Victims and survivors of domestic abuse can find details of domestic abuse support services on page 5 of this document.

We are not an investigative or intervention agency. However, our staff and contractors are in regular contact with our customers and are, therefore, in a position to potentially observe signs of abuse and to alert the appropriate agencies.

We shall endeavour to prevent, identify, report and raise awareness of domestic abuse, to safeguard the healthcare and welfare of our customers and work closely with the local authorities and partner agencies to prevent and protect customers from domestic abuse.

Our policy aims to meet our binding legal, regulatory and safeguarding responsibilities by preventing harm, supporting victims and cooperating with delivering statutory housing responses to domestic abuse.

We will take a clear approach to perpetrators of domestic abuse by holding them to account for their actions, working with appropriate agencies and with perpetrators who want to change their behaviours. We will use the powers we have or work with partners to deal with perpetrator actions to vastly reduce or eliminate risk for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

In addition to Freebridge's core values, this policy is underpinned by our values and attitudes towards domestic abuse as reflected in the table below:

Core value	Our responses to Domestic abuse will embody these relevant values
Belong <i>Inclusion and diversity are at the heart of our company culture.</i>	▪ Empathy ▪ Empowerment ▪ Respect ▪ Non-judgement and belief

Core value	Our responses to Domestic abuse will embody these relevant values
	▪ Being person centred
Own It <i>Accountability is a fundamental value at Freebridge.</i>	▪ Integrity ▪ Accountability
Think Customer <i>Our customers are at the heart of everything we do at Freebridge. With a dedication to understanding their needs and delivering excellent customer service.</i>	▪ Collaboration ▪ Empathy ▪ Empowerment ▪ Respect ▪ Accountability ▪ Non-judgement and belief ▪ Being person centred ▪ Amplifying victim/survivor voice ▪ Victim/survivor safety
One Team One Purpose <i>We value the strength that comes from unity.</i>	▪ Collaboration ▪ Accountability
Be the Change <i>Being the change means taking ownership and having a positive attitude towards the growth and change of Freebridge, our actions and striving for continuous improvement.</i>	▪ Collaboration ▪ Amplifying victim/survivor voice ▪ Victim/survivor safety

Definition of Domestic Abuse

For the purposes of this policy, domestic abuse is defined in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other.

Two people are considered personally connected if they:

- Are, or have been, married or civil partners
- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship
- Have agreed to marry or enter a civil partnership (whether or not this has ended)
- Have, or have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- Are relatives

Behaviour is considered abusive if 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

Economic abuse includes any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to:

- Acquire, use or maintain money or property; or
- Obtain goods or services

Domestic abuse may consist of:

- A single incident or
- A course of conduct (pattern of behaviour)

Abusive behaviour can be directed at a person either directly or indirectly, including through its impact on others (for example, a child within the household).

This definition recognises that domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic background.

Our commitment:

We shall:

- Treat all cases of domestic abuse seriously.
- Handle all disclosures sensitively, sympathetically and without judgment, adopting a victim-centred and belief-led approach. Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse access appropriate services as early as possible.
- Work closely with other agencies to protect those at risk of violence, and to provide access to advice and support appropriate to the individual's circumstances.
- Also work closely with other agencies to hold perpetrators to account
- Use legal action where appropriate and within our remit.

Intersectionality and support

We shall:

- Provide a supportive environment that encourages people to report domestic abuse.
- Respect gender, cultural, ethnic or sexual orientation preferences by providing, wherever possible, support from a member of staff with a similar background, in a location of the individual's choice.
- Take into consideration the individual and household situation, circumstances and all support needs in determining the best way possible to provide support.
- Train staff to understand the importance of intersectionality so they can better recognise and respond to customers' lived experiences.

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that all customers can access our Domestic Abuse support. Whether you need to access our services in alternative ways, want to update your details to reflect a change in circumstances or need additional support, we want to help as best we can.

Examples of support we provide are:

- Supplying auxiliary aids to assist in communication (such as sign language, interpreters and Induction Loops).
- Providing information in alternative formats (e.g. large print, Braille, coloured paper etc.)
- Giving extra time for customers to respond to our communications
- Sending emails or communicating via telephone in preference to hard copy letters
- Communicating with a nominated family member or third party.
- Offering advice or signposting to advice agencies/resources.

Customers can let us know about any additional support needed at any time. We will always try and meet the needs of our customers. There may be instances where this isn't possible. When this happens, we will do our best to work with you to find another solution.

Housing Support:

We shall:

- Act to secure and repair properties of victims of domestic abuse as quickly as possible.
- Work with victims and the Police to install any additional security measures considered proportionate and suitable to help protect from further incidents, such as:
 - Security lighting.
 - Additional door and/or window locks.
 - Security door chains.
 - Fencing.

- Work in conjunction with the Local Authority to provide Housing Options advice to individuals when it is decided that re-housing is the most appropriate course of action.
- Our [Allocations & Lettings Policy](#) sets out our commitment to assisting victims of domestic abuse to transfer to another property.
- We will also work with the Local Authority to assist victims to access respite or temporary accommodation suitable to their needs and that of any dependents.
- We will offer victims/survivors an annual review or named contact upon case closure
- For those moving into our properties who have recently fled from an abusive relationship we will conduct a review of the new home to assess our customer's need for any additional security features.

Our [Allocations & Lettings Policy](#) sets out our commitment to assisting victims of domestic abuse to transfer to another property.

Freebridge recognises that domestic abuse is predominantly a gendered crime and support the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda. However, we will support anyone experiencing domestic abuse and our support is not limited to just women.

Freebridge recognises the importance of intersectionality in providing tailored support and can link customers with the following services across Norfolk:

[NIDAS](#) - Countywide domestic abuse service offering trauma-informed support, including support for disabled victims and people with additional vulnerabilities.

[Leeway Domestic Violence and Abuse Services](#) - Large Norfolk domestic abuse provider supporting women, men and LGBTQ+ survivors, with refuge and outreach services

[Pandora Project](#) - Specialist West and North Norfolk domestic abuse charity supporting women and children, including LGBTQ+ support services.

[Galop](#) - National LGBTQ+ domestic abuse service frequently signposted by Norfolk authorities.

[Karma Nirvana](#) - Specialist support for victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

Confidentiality

We will agree a safe method of contact with the customer, including preferred channel, timing, voicemail/text/email permissions, neutral wording, and whether contact should be made through a nominated third party or partner agency. We will avoid communications that could increase risk and will review safe-contact arrangements whenever circumstances change

Working with perpetrators

Freebridge recognises the importance of holding perpetrators to account. Where appropriate, we will take proportionate enforcement action, including tenancy enforcement, legal remedies and partnership working with police and specialist services.

We will support multi-agency approaches to managing risk posed by perpetrators, including participation in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and safeguarding processes. We will attend MARACs in all local authority districts as and when one or more of our customers' cases are being discussed.

We will monitor information shared with us about perpetrators so we can reassess risk and victim/survivor support requirements

Working with Partners

We shall:

- Work closely with a range of partners in order to:
 - Prevent domestic abuse,
 - Report appropriately and;
 - Reduce the risk to victims, where possible.
- Participate in Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing case conferences as appropriate

Identifying, Assessing, Managing and Reporting risk of Domestic Abuse

We shall:

- Provide our front-line staff who visit customers at homes (including, for example, repairs operatives, surveyors and home energy assessors) with regular training to ensure that they remain alert to the signs of domestic abuse and feel confident to act on all concerns.
- Train appropriate colleagues to assess the level of risk to an individual using the Norfolk Constabulary's adopted version of the Association of Chief Police Officers & Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse, '*Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honor Based Violence Risk Assessment Checklist*' (the DASH model).
- Ensure colleagues also provide basic safety planning/'keeping safe' advice or signposting, whilst all appropriate referrals are made to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference.
- Refer all high-risk cases (in staff's professional judgement), including cases where 3 or more DASH Based Violence Risk assessment forms have been completed will automatically be passed to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference.
- Refer to the Police without delay, cases of immediate risk to life or on suspicion of a criminal offence and where staff have concerns for the immediate welfare of an individual.
- Signpost Individuals considered to be at low risk to appropriate partners such as Leeway, the Pandora Project or by instigating a Family Support Process referral for ongoing advice and support.

When appropriate, such as when staff require further guidance on a case or have wider

safeguarding concerns, professional advice and guidance will be sought from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk of Abuse or Neglect

Where we believe a child or another adult (who is not the person reporting domestic abuse to us) is also at risk from domestic abuse we will follow our Safeguarding Children & Young People and Safeguarding Adults at risk of Abuse or Neglect Policies and procedures, to involve other agencies as appropriate, in order to protect the welfare of others.

Children are also recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse or are related to the survivor or the perpetrator.

Information Sharing

We shall:

- Recognise the importance of treating all information with appropriate caution and shall ensure that our staff comply with all relevant legislation when handling data.
- Consider that we have an overriding responsibility to report concerns of domestic abuse, and the safety of the individual is of paramount importance. This may mean that at times we are forced to override the wishes of a person based on the assessment of risk and potential harm.
- Work closely and openly with individuals to advise them of and discuss our concerns. Whenever possible our staff will inform before sharing information with other agencies.

Where this is not possible, or it is considered that this may potentially increase the risk to the individual concerned, then an undisclosed referral will be made.

Training

We shall:

- Brief all newly recruited relevant colleagues during their induction period on domestic abuse awareness & our own procedures. All other newly recruited customer-facing staff will receive an internal briefing within three months regarding safeguarding in general.
- Provide annual customer-facing staff (refresher) training in all relevant aspects of safeguarding, including domestic abuse.
- Maintain comprehensive and easily accessible procedures for all customer-facing staff to support them in their work.
- Provide enhanced training to our nominated Domestic Abuse Champions to allow further support to staff around identifying and responding to concerns of abuse, assessing risk and making referrals.
- Ensure that contractors and their staff working on behalf of Freebridge have an awareness of domestic abuse and report any concerns that they have, as a result of working with any of our families, directly to our Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Awareness

We shall:

- Seek to raise awareness of domestic abuse, and provide information to customers to enable victims to seek timely and appropriate support; and
- Support the work of the Norfolk Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board in championing the 'Norfolk Says No' campaign, and any other relevant events.

Monitoring

The policy will be subject to a bi-annual formal review to ensure that it continues to reflect best practice as well as relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. As with all new and significantly-reviewed policies we will consult with our Customer Insight Panel and use our best endeavours to obtain feedback from victims and survivors with lived experience

The policy will be subject to a bi-annual formal review to ensure that it continues to reflect best practice as well as relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. As with all new and significantly-reviewed policies we will consult with our Customer Insight Panel and use our best endeavours to obtain feedback from victims and survivors with lived experience

We will monitor the number of incidents of domestic abuse that we deal with along with the following information about the victim:

- Gender.
- Ethnic origin.
- Age.
- Disability.
- Religion.
- Sexual orientation.

Linked Company Policies

[Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment and Hate Crimes Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse or Neglect Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#)

[Rechargeable Works Policy](#)

Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Improvements Policy

[Allocations and Lettings Policy](#)

[Tenancy Policy](#)

[Tenancy Sustainment Policy](#)

Customer Equality, Diversion and Inclusion Policy

[Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

Legislation relevant to this policy**Core domestic abuse legislation**

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
The key piece of legislation. Important for:

- the statutory definition of domestic abuse
 - recognition of children as victims
 - economic abuse
 - housing security and homelessness duties
 - lifetime tenancy protections for survivors
 - Domestic Abuse Protection Notices/Orders framework
- Serious Crime Act 2015
Particularly section 76 covering controlling or coercive behaviour.
 - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Relevant to stalking, harassment and injunctions.
 - Crime and Security Act 2010
Includes Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (some provisions now supplemented/replaced through later legislation).
 - Family Law Act 1996
Important for:
 - non-molestation orders
 - occupation orders
 - exclusion from the home

Housing and homelessness legislation

- Housing Act 1996
Especially Part VII homelessness duties and priority need provisions for survivors of domestic abuse.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
Prevention and relief duties relevant where domestic abuse places a tenant at risk of homelessness.
- Housing Act 1988
Relevant to assured tenancies and possession matters.
- Housing Act 1985
Relevant to secure tenancies and succession/security issues.
- Localism Act 2011
Relevant where flexible/fixed-term tenancies are used.

Safeguarding and children legislation

- Children Act 1989
Domestic abuse is a major safeguarding consideration under child welfare duties.
- Children Act 2004
Especially section 11 safeguarding duties and multi-agency working.
- Care Act 2014
Relevant where adults with care and support needs are at risk.

Equality and human rights legislation

- Equality Act 2010
Important for:
 - protected characteristics
 - discrimination
 - reasonable adjustments
 - trauma-informed and inclusive service delivery

- Human Rights Act 1998
Relevant to safety, dignity, privacy and proportionality.

Data sharing and confidentiality

- UK General Data Protection Regulation
Relevant to confidentiality, information sharing and safeguarding disclosures.
- Data Protection Act 2018
Complements UK GDPR requirements.

ASB and community safety legislation

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
Relevant where perpetrators cause nuisance, harassment or community safety risks.