



DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Domestic Abuse Policy			
Last Reviewed	June 2025	Next Review	July 2026
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

Policy Statement: Freebridge believe 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.

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.

Policy Detail:

We shall:

- Treat all cases of domestic abuse seriously.
- Take a victim centred 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.
- Use legal action where appropriate and within our remit.

Support Needs

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.

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 dependants.

- Provide tenancy advice to individuals where a joint tenancy exists, and when appropriate, consider legal action against perpetrators e.g. injunctions, possession orders etc.

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 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.
- Sign post 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.

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 an annual formal review to ensure that it continues to reflect best practice as well as relevant legislation and regulatory requirements.

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.