



Domestic Abuse Policy

Version 1

Approved by: Executive Team
Approved date: April 2017

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Domestic abuse is a serious crime that often takes place in the home. It impacts on the safety of individuals, households and communities. We believe that domestic abuse presents one of the highest risks to personal safety. Therefore we will deal with all reports of domestic abuse as an emergency.
- 1.2 The aims of this Policy are to improve the safety of our residents affected by domestic abuse, and prevent further incidents by encouraging earlier reporting and responding rapidly.
- 1.3 We work with other agencies to ensure the safety of survivors, meet their needs and take action against perpetrators.
- 1.4 This Policy relates to all Optivo residents. We have a separate Policy for colleagues experiencing domestic abuse in their personal lives. When we deal with reports of domestic abuse we will also refer to our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

2.0 What is domestic abuse?

- 2.1 We use the government definition of domestic abuse, which is:
“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”
- 2.2 Domestic abuse can also occur through the actions of immediate and extended family members through unlawful acts, such as forced marriage, ‘honour based abuse’, and female genital mutilation (FGM).
- 2.3 We encourage you to report domestic abuse, whether you are a survivor of, or a witness to, an incident. We will deal with all reports of domestic abuse with sensitivity. If you are a witness and want to remain anonymous, we will respect this.
- 2.4 We will operate a victim-centred approach when handling domestic abuse cases.

3.0 What is a victim centred approach?

- 3.1 We use the term ‘victim’ as well as ‘survivor’ to refer to someone who is or has experienced domestic abuse. If you feel you are experiencing domestic abuse, we’ll deal with it as domestic abuse.
- 3.2 We’ll deal with all reports in a non-judgemental manner. We will not require survivors to take legal action or contact the police before we provide assistance. Any action we

take will be with the survivor's consent. The only exception is if there is a risk of serious harm to you or others.

- 3.3 Applying a victim centred approach means we will assist you to reach a decision which you feel best secures your safety. We will do this by reviewing your accommodation, enabling the level of support you want and taking action against the perpetrator you feel is most appropriate.
- 3.4 We will help you to get advice from either an internal or external domestic abuse specialist. We will seek to ensure that every resident reporting domestic abuse receives an effective response. Where possible we will offer the option of being interviewed by an officer of the gender requested by you.
- 3.5 The victim centred approach means that we don't interview alleged perpetrators to get their account of events as we would for other types of anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6 We won't usually charge victims for the damage to property caused by the perpetrator. We will set aside dedicated discretionary fund for survivors, to support them in rebuilding their lives and homes. To send a clear message and deter domestic abuse we'll take the strongest possible action against individuals committing domestic abuse.

4.0 If you don't feel safe in your home

- 4.1 We can help you access emergency accommodation provided by a Local Authority or a refuge. Optivo does not own any emergency accommodation. If you need permanent re-housing we can consider you for a prioritised move.

5.0 What action do we take to prevent domestic abuse?

- 5.1 To prevent domestic abuse we will raise awareness and encourage reporting through training, campaigns and promotion through our communication channels. We will make new residents aware of relationship breakdown policies and the implications of joint tenancies. Where appropriate we will seek disclosure on a resident / potential resident through Clare's Law. This is a domestic violence disclosure scheme where the Police can release information on a person's previous convictions where it believes a person is at risk of domestic abuse from their partner.

6.0 What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This Policy should have direct and positive equality and diversity impacts.

7.0 Review

- 7.1 We will review this Policy to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.