

Golden Lane Housing



Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

January 2024

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

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1. Policy statement

Everything we do at Golden Lane Housing is about valuing and supporting people with a learning disability or autistic people to live safe and fulfilled lives. This policy is designed to outline our commitment to supporting tenants if they experience domestic violence and abuse.

Domestic abuse is an abuse of human rights and in cases of physical and sexual abuse, it can be a criminal offence. It often escalates over time in frequency and severity and affects an individual's mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Golden Lane Housing recognises that domestic violence and abuse cuts across social class, economic status, ethnicity and cultural background and can have a social, financial and health impact on individuals.

Golden Lane Housing will treat all concerns of domestic violence and abuse as high priority and in line with Golden Lane Housing's Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure. Golden Lane Housing will always work with tenants, their families and support networks, taking the necessary action to stop any form of abuse, by working in partnership with other professionals, such as the police, local authorities, domestic abuse agencies, and health services.

2. Definition

Golden Lane Housing adopts the cross-government definition of Domestic Violence and Abuse.

'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'.

Golden Lane Housing recognises that domestic violence and abuse is not always physical; examples can include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological
- Financial abuse
- On-line abuse (e.g. chat rooms)
- Technology facilitated abuse (e.g. on-line targeted scams)
- Emotional or psychological
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced Marriage
- Honour based violence / abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Harassment or stalking

This policy covers any tenant aged 16 or over who resides in any Golden Lane Housing property.

3. The key aims of this policy

Promote the welfare of all Golden Lane Housing tenants who have experienced domestic violence and abuse by:

- Creating a safe environment where tenants feel they can approach us, are encouraged to talk and are listened to, thus enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and live as independently as possible.
- Providing timely and effective guidance to tenants by working in partnership with the relevant partner agencies to respond to any cases of domestic violence and abuse that may arise in line with our Safeguarding Adults Procedure.
- Seeking to enhance the safety and security of those involved and also support them to increase their confidence, resilience and empower themselves to live independently by working in partnership with others.

4. The key objectives of this policy

Commit to responding to all concerns of domestic violence and abuse in a responsive, person-centred and supportive manner and in line with Golden Lane Housing's Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure to:

- Ensure that tenants experiencing domestic abuse can access appropriate services as early as possible and are given advice to allow them to make choices about what to do next.
- Assist tenants who are / have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them, adult social care and other support agencies.
- Assist tenants to employ the use of civil and criminal laws which can offer them protection and also act as a preventative measure to avoid further abuse.
- Ensure that tenants experiencing abuse are not deterred from reporting abuse by regularly talking to tenants about the importance of keeping safe and explain what they can expect from Golden Lane Housing as their landlord in helping to keep them safe from all different kinds of abuse.
- Seek appropriate support solutions for perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, by working in partnership with other professionals, to prevent abuse recurring.
- Follow the relevant Golden Lane Housing Safeguarding Adults procedure if we believe a tenant is at risk due to an abusive relationship.

5. Cross references

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Golden Lane Housing documents;

- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Procedure
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

- Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure
- Data Protection Policy

6. Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's revised Neighbourhood and Community Standard and Tenancy Standard which come into force on 1st April 2024 and sets out Golden Lane Housing's approach to tackling domestic violence and abuse. This policy seeks to sensitively address domestic abuse and demonstrate that tenants are made aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to domestic abuse. Golden Lane Housing will aim to adhere to all relevant legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory standards and will co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

Laws and Acts for further guidance

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (s.3)
- Stalking Protection Act 2019
- Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- The Care Act 2014
- Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

7. Reviewing and monitoring of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Golden Lane Housing will seek feedback from tenants, families, support providers and local authority and safeguarding colleagues on how cases of domestic violence and abuse were handled and identify areas for improvement. We will monitor the effectiveness and implementation of this policy to ensure that we continue to provide the best possible services to tenants surrounding domestic violence and abuse and any other type of abuse.

Golden Lane Housing will provide awareness, policy and procedure training for all staff within the organisation on the different types of abuse and safeguarding matters. We will ensure training is provided to all relevant staff on accurately recording cases and ensuring they are passed to the relevant team to manage. Individual cases of any type of abuse will be discussed between the housing officer managing the case

and their line manager on a regular basis, seeking support from Golden Lane Housing's safeguarding lead and safeguarding deputy where appropriate.

When domestic abuse is disclosed, we will be clear about confidentiality and our safeguarding obligations. It is preferable to obtain consent when making referrals for individuals experiencing domestic violence and abuse and sharing information with external agencies. However, referrals can be made without consent if Golden Lane Housing staff believe the tenant is at immediate risk of harm or they believe a criminal offence has taken place.

Golden Lane Housing has a separate Safeguarding Policy and Procedure; this should be adhered to whenever there are any concerns of domestic violence and abuse or any other type of abuse.

8. Equality and Diversity

Golden Lane Housing values the equality and diversity of our tenants and we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity to ensure all tenants are treated fairly when dealing with any reports on domestic violence and abuse.

Golden Lane Housing also recognises that people with long term illness or disability who are living in a domestic setting may be at increased risk of domestic violence and abuse. Appropriate steps will be taken to support anyone in these circumstances.

9. Data Protection

Under the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018, organisations have to process personal information 'lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.' Golden Lane Housing are committed to respecting the privacy of our tenants and we will protect their personal data.

In certain circumstances, Golden Lane Housing may be required to share personal data with other statutory agencies. Where practical, consent from the Data Subject will be obtained prior to the information being shared, however there may be instances where Golden Lane Housing have a statutory duty to share information without the individuals consent e.g. if there is any reason to suspect children are at risk, if the individual does not have capacity or if an individual is in immediate risk of abuse or for the prevention and detection of crime. An assessment will be made in each case to decide which information is necessary to be shared, referring to the Data Protection Officer for further guidance as required.

Tenants also have the right to know what Information Golden Lane Housing hold about them. Golden Lane has a separate Data Protection Policy which should be adhered to when investigating complaints of domestic violence and abuse.

10. Complaints

Victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse can make a complaint to Golden Lane Housing through in accordance with the Complaints Policy if they are unhappy with the way in which their case was handled. Complainants will be advised of their right to make contact with the Housing Ombudsman once our complaints process has been exhausted.

MONITORING, APPROVAL AND REVIEW

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Lead Officer / Author | Becky Arrowsmith, Head of Housing & Safeguarding Lead |
| Version No./Date | Version 2 – January 2024 |
| Version Notes | Updated law and domestic abuse categories |
| Consultation | GLH internal colleagues and Exec |
| Equality Analysis | Completed and submitted to Equality and Diversity Committee for approval |
| Approved by/Date | Board 23/01/2023 |
| Policy Review Date | January 2027 |
| Electronic File Location | S:\GLH\GLH document library\Policy Processes Procedures Strategies\Housing\Policies |
| Copy available from | Becky Arrowsmith, Head of Housing & Safeguarding Lead |