



## **Gentoo Domestic Abuse Policy**

Policy:	Domestic Abuse Policy
Version number:	10.1
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Policy Owner:	Operations Manager- Community Safety and Safeguarding
Policy Author(s):	Operations Manager- Community Safety and Safeguarding
Accountable Exec Director:	Director of Housing
Approved by:	Executive Director Corporate Services
Equality Assessment:	Yes
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Policy Grade:	3
For the full version history of this policy, see the back page	

Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy. Printed versions may quickly go out of date – the latest version will be on the Policy Hub, or contact the Governance Team. For support and advice regarding the policy, please contact the Policy Owner.

## 1.0 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Gentoo will take steps to assist and support any person experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse. This includes forced marriage. It applies to all customers including those living with our tenants.
- 1.2 Domestic abuse is still a largely hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
- 1.3 As a Housing Provider we are well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is essential that we take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and work positively and pro-actively with the victim to offer support.
- 1.4 In addition, we will seek to assist perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour by helping them access support and assistance.
- 1.5 The scope of this Policy covers:

Gentoo Group	X
Gentoo Homes	
Gentoo Developments Ltd	
Gentoo Genie	

It applies to:

General Needs rented properties	X
Supported Housing	X
Sheltered Housing	X
Leasehold/Shared ownership	X
Rent to Buy properties	X
Market rented properties (domestic)	X
Temporary Accommodation	X
Stock owned but not managed by the Group	
Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties	
Commercial Property (offices, depots etc)	
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	

Garages and outbuildings	
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc)	
Curtilage	

## 2.0 Our core purpose and vision and priorities

Our core purpose is to provide safe and decent homes for our customers of today and tomorrow.

Our vision is to provide great homes, strong communities, and inspired people for Sunderland.

The safety of our customers and colleagues will always be our number one priority.

We have identified six further priorities which will guide the delivery of our services.

We live our values in everything we do from the boardroom to the front room, to deliver our priorities for our customers.

- We know our customers.
- We provide great homes.
- We help communities to thrive.
- We are a great place to work.
- We spend our money wisely.
- We are well governed.

Our values are what we stand for and what we want to be known for. They are what makes us, us.

- We care about people.
- We take accountability.
- We shape the future.
- We bring leadership.
- We deliver.

2.1 This Policy operates within our Vision and Values and links to the following Policies:

- Neighborhood Safety Policy and associated Toolkits
- Safeguarding Children Policy and Toolkit
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and Toolkit

- Tenancy Management Policy and Toolkit
- Forced Marriage Toolkit
- Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Toolkit
- Allocations Policy and Toolkit

### **3.0 Regulation and legislation**

3.1 This Policy helps to fulfil the following legislation:

- The Housing Act 1988 & 1996
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Equality Act 2010
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- 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 (DVDS)

#### **National Policy Links**

HM Government Violence against Women and Girls Strategy and Action

Plan (2010)

ADASS Adult Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse - guide to support practitioners and managers

HM Government Forced Marriage Guidance including info on Forced Marriages Unit (FMU)

## **4.0 Our Policy statement**

4.1 At Gentoo, we believe that our customers and householders should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner, or any other member of their household.

4.2 People experiencing domestic abuse will be treated in a sympathetic, supportive, and non-judgmental way. A victim's disclosure alone is sufficient for them to be given advice and assistance as a matter of priority by staff.

4.3 **We will:**

- Ensure that people experiencing any form of 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.
- Support people who are / have experienced abuse to rebuild their lives by working in partnership with them and other support agencies.
- Ensure that where children and young people are affected by domestic abuse, they too have access to services as early as possible.
- Support victims to employ the use of civil and criminal laws which can offer them protection and act as a preventative measure to avoid further abuse.
- Ensure that people experiencing abuse are not deterred from reporting abuse.
- Seek appropriate support solutions for perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent abuse recurring.
- Follow the relevant child protection / Safeguarding Children policies and toolkits if we believe a child is at risk due to an abusive relationship.

- Follow the relevant Safeguarding Adults toolkit if we believe a vulnerable adult is at risk due to an abusive relationship.
- Provide support and guidance to employees experiencing domestic abuse. \*
- Not tolerate domestic abuse from our employees and work with employees to support to any member of staff who is a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse. \*

\*Please refer to Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy.

## **5.0 Roles and responsibilities**

- 5.1 Overall responsibility for this Policy lies with Operations Manager-Community Safety and Safeguarding, accountability lies with Executive Director for Housing.

## **6.0 Monitoring and review**

6.1 This Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or in line with business need or changes in regulation and/or legislation. Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to staff as a result of any changes.

6.2 The Safety and Support Team (which includes Domestic Abuse) forms part of the Business Assurance 5 year strategic plan and will be audited in accordance with this.

6.3 Our Support Service is monitored on a range of Key Performance

Indicator's (KPI's) and outcomes which include, but are not limited to:

- Number of victims and perpetrators supported
- Profiling of the type of abuse
- Feelings of safety
- Our involvement with a range of specialist agencies and groups including
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

6.4 Through wider monitoring mechanisms of the whole Safety and Support Team, we are able to determine how satisfied customers are with the service, how many customers have entered and left the service, and record any compliments and complaints in relation to the service.

6.5 This Policy and the Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Toolkits have been cross referenced with good practice and Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) standards. There are no specific Domestic Abuse standards in the CIH Best Practice Manual.

6.6 This Policy is a grade 3 and changes will need the approval of the Executive Director for Housing.

6.7 The Local Service Offers can be found in the Appendix.

## **7.0 Policy Outcomes**

7.1 Our policy aims to achieve the following:

- To enable people to fulfil their aspirations, we will promote the welfare of all victims of domestic abuse who come into contact with the Group.
- Create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse 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 more independently.
- Provide timely and effective guidance by working in partnership with relevant agencies to respond to any cases of abuse that may arise. We seek to enhance the safety and security of those involved and support them to increase their confidence, resilience and empower themselves to live independently.
- Provide employees with clear and practical guidance to ensure we support and protect victims of abuse, allowing victims to have more information about their choices so that they feel empowered to fulfil their ambitions.
- Work in partnership to offer support to perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour. We will work with perpetrators to increase their motivation, skills and knowledge and build confidence and resilience to combat their abusive behaviour patterns.

## **8.0 Diversity and Inclusion**

8.1 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 or 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.

8.2 Our Domestic Abuse Policy and Toolkit and the Forced Marriage Toolkit will ensure that customers are treated as individuals and with fairness and respect.

## **9.0 Records**

9.1 All records regarding domestic abuse are held on Streetwise in the appropriate module.

## **10.0 Background**

10.1 The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

10.2 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.

### **Coercive and Controlling Behaviour**

10.3 In 2014 the Government announced a new domestic abuse offence of coercive and controlling behaviour.

10.4 Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capabilities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

10.5 Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

- 10.6 The new law will help protect victims by outlawing sustained patterns of behaviour that stop short of serious physical violence, but amount to extreme psychological and emotional abuse. Victims of coercive control can have every aspect of life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and humiliation.

## 11.0 Definitions of Abuse

- 11.1 Domestic Abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional
- Discriminatory

- 11.2 The definition includes honour based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of esteem to loss of life.

- 11.3 **Physical Abuse** can include: hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, hitting with objects, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, strangulation, choking.

- 11.4 **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.

- 11.5 **Financial abuse** can include: controlling money and bank accounts, making a victim account for all their expenditure, running up debts in a victim's name, allowing no say on how monies are spent, refusing to allow them to study or work.

- 11.6 **Psychological and Emotional Violence and Abuse** has a profound

impact upon victims and their children. It can leave a victim with little confidence that they can do anything to change the situation. Examples include:

- Creating isolation e.g. not allowing them to see other people, preventing them from making their own friendships, not allowing them to go anywhere on their own, causing them to be depressed and then using this against them.
- Use of threats e.g. threats to kill their family, children, friends, pets; to throw them out and keep the children; to find them if they ever leave; to have them locked up; to tell everyone they are mad.
- Putting them down – humiliating and undermining them in front of others or in front of their children; telling them they are stupid, hopeless, unlovable, that no one would believe them, or that they are a bad parent.

**11.7 Discriminatory Abuse** (with reference to Forced Marriage) 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
- Appearance

11.8 Coercive and controlling behaviour underpins domestic abuse and is explained as a range of purposeful behaviours including intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse, and manipulation. These behaviours are often used as the primary mechanisms for achieving power and control in an abusive relationship and these behaviours reinforce the threat or reality of physical abuse.

### 11.9 **Family and Inter-generational Abuse**

- 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.
- More focus is required to address family and inter-generational abuse, and how it differs from partner abuse, for example if the perpetrator is the victim's teenage or adult sibling, child or grandchild.
- Careful consideration is required when dealing with family and inter-generational abuse due to the complexities of family composition and safeguarding implications.

### 11.10 **Elder Abuse**

Research has found that domestic abuse is experienced by both women and men regardless of age, disability and ethnic background. Elder abuse can be even more detrimental to a victim's wellbeing due to problems with mobility, mental health and social isolation. Older people may have come to accept some aspects of domestic abuse as the 'norm' dependent upon their generation. For example, in the past the male of the relationship may have been the only one to work and was traditionally seen as the breadwinner and thus have control of their finances and limit their partners' access to money, we would now accept this as financial abuse.

### 11.11 **Wellbeing**

The Care Act 2014 specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a

key part of a person's wellbeing. The guidance outlines that abuse takes many forms, and practitioners should not be constrained in their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect. It describes numerous types of abuse including:

- domestic violence
- psychological abuse
- financial and material abuse
- sexual abuse
- physical abuse

The Care Act guidance outlines specific aims to stop abuse and neglect, prevent harm and address what has caused the abuse.

#### **11.12 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 victims and safeguarding adults the two have developed separate professional practices.

If domestic abuse is an isolated issue and there are no other safeguarding concerns, then support can be sought via forums such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). 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.

However, we will always encourage staff to make a Safeguarding Adults referral even if it is just for information so that agencies are mindful of our concerns, as there may be other issues we are not aware of.

There is also strong, evidenced based links between domestic abuse and child abuse. Exposure to domestic abuse is always detrimental to children, although the impacts may vary. Children exposed to abuse at home may be affected by physical and/or emotional abuse, neglect and ongoing psychological damage.

This means that in domestic abuse cases where children are present practitioners have a duty to involve Children's Services to ensure any children are adequately safeguarded.

*See:*

*Safeguarding Children Policy and Toolkit*

*Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and Toolkit*

## Appendix A

### Local Service Offers

#### Description

#### We Will:

<b>Neighbourhood Safety</b> - to help our neighbours feel safe and secure by preventing and minimising anti-social behaviour (ASB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer appropriate support and advice to victims and perpetrators of ASB and domestic abuse</li><li>• Take relevant action specific to any reports of ASB or domestic abuse received</li><li>• Provide you with a timely response to any reports of ASB or domestic abuse received</li></ul>
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## Version Control

Version	Reason	Issuer	Date
8.0	Amended format	Sarah Treadwell	09/03/18
8.1	Amended names to job titles and added accountable Exec Director	Sarah Treadwell	13/50/19
9.0	Updated job titles, 'procedure' changed to 'toolkit', removed CAADA reference	Mel Smith	02/06/19
10.0	Forced marriage included in policy.	Julie Lister	21/03/21
10.1	Updated core purpose and vision and	Catherine Loftus	31/08/2023