



ST LUKE'S HOUSING SOCIETY
MCMASTER HOUSE

ST LUKE'S HOUSING SOCIETY DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

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Reviewed By:	Head of Operations
Other related policies:	Safeguarding Adults, Support Planning, Allocations and Lettings; Compliments and Complaints; Equality and Diversity.

1. Overview

St Luke's Housing Society uses the DA Act 2021 definition of Domestic Abuse:

"Domestic abuse describes abusive behaviours that take place between two people aged over 16 who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships; or have a child together; or are relatives, including abuse of adult parents or adult children."

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that abuse can be a single incident but is more often a repeated pattern of behaviours that can take many forms. These behaviours can include one or several of the following:

- Physical or Sexual Abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic or Financial Abuse
- Online Abuse
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Stalking
- ‘Honour’ based violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
- The Law also defines children as being victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse.

2. Policy Summary

We strongly maintain the principle that no individual should endure the threat of violence or abuse. This policy demonstrates our commitment to addressing all reports of domestic abuse by providing timely responses to and offering tailored support packages that align with their individual needs.

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and employ staff who are experienced and trained to listen, assess and signpost to support agencies. Our approach is to treat individuals experiencing domestic abuse with care, empathy, understanding and without any form of judgment.

This policy applies to all current St Luke’s Housing Society residents/applicants only. As an Employer, we also follow similar processes for our staff reporting Domestic Abuse.

3. Objectives

The domestic abuse policy of St Luke’s Housing Society is designed to ensure the safety of our Tenants affected by domestic abuse while empowering our staff to meet the needs of those individuals effectively.

With over 40 years of experience, St Luke’s Housing Society successfully delivers sheltered accommodation and associated support services to residents over 55. We support individuals to live independently, carry out support planning and can advise and signpost survivors of domestic abuse to the vital support services they need.

Domestic abuse is a serious issue that requires urgent attention. St Luke's Housing Society believes that all forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone has the right to live free from harm.

To support individuals affected by domestic abuse, we focus on providing a positive response that promotes safety and empowerment. We offer access to vital resources, including specialised domestic abuse services, thorough risk assessments, and personalised safety planning. Together, we can create a supportive community that helps survivors rebuild their lives.

Domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated by men against women; however, St Luke's Housing Society acknowledges that abusive behaviour can impact individuals across all communities, irrespective of gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, socio-economic status, or housing tenure. Furthermore, we recognise that the experiences of survivors of domestic abuse may be influenced by these factors.

When handling reports of domestic abuse, staff at St Luke's Housing Society need to place the wishes of the individual experiencing the abuse at the forefront of their response. We understand that this is an incredibly difficult time for those experiencing domestic abuse.

Whilst we must consider risks, safeguarding, and child protection concerns, our approach should always be guided by compassion and a commitment to prioritising the needs and preferences of the person affected.

4. Regulatory and Legal Considerations

The Domestic Abuse Policy considers the following legislation, and Staffs are encouraged to refer to this legislation where cases require:

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Policy
- The Housing Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014

5. Raising Awareness Around Domestic Abuse

Tenants affected by domestic abuse can request specialist support from the Head of Operations or Housing Support Worker on any of the following contact methods:

- Tel: 07843 209 396 – phone, text or WhatsApp
- Email: enquiries@saintlukeshs.uk

For urgent cases, we aim to contact you within one working day to discuss your concerns.

St Luke's Housing Society will publicise information to raise awareness about domestic abuse, telling our tenants how to get help if they need it and the type of response they can expect from us. We will do this through our website, face-to-face and information onsite.

Staff receive Domestic Abuse training and are trained to spot and respond to the signs of domestic abuse when working in homes or having interactions with our residents.

6. Responding to Reports of Domestic Abuse

We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously and provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with specialised agencies to provide a coordinated response.

We maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards domestic abuse, ensuring that perpetrators are held fully accountable for their actions. It is important to recognise and communicate clearly that domestic abuse is never the responsibility of the survivor.

We are aware of the differences between domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and understand that our approach and response to cases require sensitivity and consideration.

Our approach is deeply rooted in a survivor-centred framework, prioritising the desires of those affected and their ongoing safety as we assess the most suitable course of action. We are committed to creating a supportive environment where we support those affected, to have their voices heard and respected at every step of the process.

If you report a case of domestic abuse, we'll respond within **one working day** to liaise with you about the next steps.

Our Head of Operations or Housing Support Worker will agree on your preferred method of communication and will work with you to explore the options that are available.

We will use a full range of remedies as appropriate, considering the needs of each case and will advise about possible course of action, both to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with it in the longer term.

7. Signposting and Support

We work closely with relevant agencies, considering the unique circumstances of each individual. We strive to explore the different options available that may be appropriate and beneficial for them.

We're here to offer compassionate support and guidance tailored to your needs. This includes sharing information about alternative housing options, suggesting enhanced security measures for your home, and connecting you with specialised organisations that can provide the assistance you may need. We want our residents to know they do not have to go through this alone and we are committed to keeping our residents safe.

At St Luke's Housing Society, we understand that navigating legal matters can be overwhelming. While we can't provide legal advice, we genuinely care about your situation and are here to help.

We can signpost you to organisations that offer support and advice around Domestic Abuse injunctions, non-molestation orders, property adjustment orders, and other essential legal concerns you may have.

Additionally, we're here to offer support and information about other options available to you, such as going from a joint tenancy to a sole tenancy when needed. Your well-being is important to us, and we want to assist you as much as we can.

We recognise that housing is one of the main factors why survivors don't leave abusive homes. If you fear for your immediate safety, we'll work in partnership with the relevant local authorities and partners to consider your housing options. This could include temporary accommodation or a permanent transfer if there is no prospect of a safe return, following our Allocations Policy and Tenancy Policy.

If you need to move home, we'll work with you to identify areas that will minimise the risk of future abuse. We'll also continue to take action against the perpetrator where relevant.

A significant number of adults experiencing domestic abuse may require safeguarding interventions. Staff receive training to recognise these circumstances and are responsible for making safeguarding referrals as necessary to ensure the protection of those affected. This practice is consistent with our Safeguarding Policy.

We will refer survivors to services that provide a safety plan, benefits, and financial and legal advice. Furthermore, we will continuously review all cases involving domestic

abuse until the survivor confirms that the situation has been satisfactorily addressed.

Whilst we are dealing with the case and after it's been resolved we will provide support for survivors, their families and witnesses to make sure they feel safe in their home and the community in which they live.

We understand that this is a challenging time, and we are committed to supporting our residents with care and compassion.

8. Risk Assessment

To ensure we provide the best possible assistance, we will conduct a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour-Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH 2009 risk model). This is a widely recognised tool used across the UK by us and other agencies to help us understand your situation. The assessment will guide our actions and referral options as we work together to create a safe plan for you. **Please refer to the appendix for a copy of the DASH assessment.**

St Luke's Housing Society have Staffs who oversee Domestic Abuse reports, have good local knowledge within the communities they work of specialist support providers around domestic abuse including IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy) services, MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs) co-ordinators and other specialist services. **Please see the appendix for the Domestic Abuse referral table.**

We are committed to partnering with relevant agencies to actively support and direct perpetrators of domestic abuse who acknowledge their behaviour and are ready to make a change. At the same time, we will hold these perpetrators accountable, taking decisive action to address issues such as rent arrears, property damage, tenancy agreements, and explore alternative housing options. Furthermore, we will empower survivors by ensuring they have access to critical information and support regarding legal protective measures.

9. Housing

We understand that housing can be a significant barrier for survivors trying to leave abusive situations. If you find yourself needing to move urgently, please know that we are here to support you. We will work with domestic abuse services, local authorities, statutory agencies and the police where required, to help you explore housing options that meet your needs. Your safety and well-being are our top priorities.

10. Security and Repairs

When additional security measures are necessary for the protection of individuals affected by domestic abuse, we will proactively explore these options with the Tenant. St Luke's Housing Society is equipped to provide these solutions and will collaborate closely with local organisations to ensure that these vital services are available. Your safety is paramount, and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to support you.

Our contractors will undertake the necessary repairs as required. Where possible, these works will be classified as emergency repairs and completed within a 24-hour timeframe. If immediate action is not possible, the repairs will be conducted at the earliest possible opportunity. Updates regarding the status and timeline of these repairs will be communicated with the resident. There will be no charge made to the resident in these circumstances.

11. Confidentiality and GDPR

St Luke's Housing Society acknowledges the sensitivity surrounding cases of domestic abuse and is committed to handling them with the utmost care. Our team will only share information with our Tenant's permission, except in specific circumstances where safety is at risk. For example:

- **raising safeguarding concerns about adults with care and support needs or child protection concerns**
- **referring high-risk cases to MARAC**
- **where St Luke's Housing Society is required by law, for example, if being questioned by police as part of a criminal investigation.**

12. Health and Safety

St Luke's Housing Society staff will always follow health and safety and lone working policies when managing reports of domestic abuse. Staffs will also consider the safety of all parties involved in a case and other residents.

We will carry out the DASH risk assessment and ensure that our forms of communication are suited to the survivor and agree on the safest options.

13. Safeguarding

St. Luke's Housing Society is fully committed to meeting our statutory safeguarding requirements following our policies and procedures regarding safeguarding concerns for vulnerable clients. In all instances of domestic abuse, our staff will consistently refer to St. Luke's Housing Society's Safeguarding Adults policy.

14. Equality and Diversity

When addressing domestic abuse, we are committed to prioritising the well-being of the adult at risk. We are committed to inclusivity and respect for diverse characteristics, including disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture, and lifestyle. We will take meaningful actions to ensure that everyone affected by domestic abuse receives the support they need and deserve.

Our Staffs understand that individuals may encounter multiple forms of discrimination. This understanding enables us to address the needs of those who may be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable, as well as to acknowledge the unique experiences of specific groups regarding domestic abuse. Additionally, we are aware of the cultural and systemic barriers that might prevent the reporting of domestic abuse.

We are dedicated to ensuring our services are accessible and inclusive to all individuals. We can look at translation services, advocates and other specialist organisations to support various needs.

15. Recording, reporting and monitoring

When working in partnership with other agencies, it may be necessary to share certain information regarding both the case and the individual involved. Information will only be disclosed with the consent of the resident unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult. As a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), we are obligated to uphold a duty of care in such circumstances.

In addition, agencies such as the police may request personal data about our Tenants as part of their own ongoing investigation. In these cases, the Head of Operations will assess the sharing of data on a case-by-case basis, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

When managing any domestic abuse case information must be recorded accurately and promptly. In addition, Staffs may also be called upon to complete relevant forms for

the local authority, MARAC teams, local Safeguarding Team and/or the police.

Staffs should approach case recordings with sensitivity, especially in joint tenancy situations. It is essential to use factual language that is free from personal judgments or assessments.

The Head of Operations will be responsible for monitoring the progress of MARAC / safeguarding referrals made to the Local Authority.

16. Complaints

Tenants who are not satisfied with our services related to domestic abuse may wish to file a formal complaint. St Luke's Housing Society has a Compliments and Complaints Policy that provides information on how to address concerns.



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Domestic Abuse Support Planning – Referral Options

Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS)

Website: www.a2dominion.co.uk

Helpline: 0800 731 0055 (M – F 10:00 – 19:00)

Email: DAS@a2dominion.co.uk

Link to referral form: [Domestic abuse support services | A2Dominion](#)

For residents experiencing Domestic Abuse, please arrange an appointment with Head of Operations to discuss and review what actions we should take.

All interviews with resident or the complainant should be held somewhere safe and confidential.

Record all information and take detailed notes with agreed actions.

Information should be obtained on whether they are in immediate danger.

Residents are encouraged to report to the police. Where residents do not want to report, but have disclosed abuse to you, remember we still have a Duty of Care.

Staff can report any incidents of Domestic Abuse to the Police. It is important to disclose whether resident has given permission or not.

For emergencies:

999

Non-Emergency:

101

<p>A DASH risk assessment will be carried out by staff to carry out with all residents reporting Domestic Abuse. Where possible, try and complete these ASAP with the resident. If they will not engage, try to complete the risk assessment once you have spoken to them to try and assess the risk level.</p> <p>All residents reporting abuse should be encouraged to contact the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service on details opposite.</p> <p>They should also be encouraged to report the incidents to the Police.</p> <p>Residents should be allowed to make phone calls in the office in private with a member of staff to support them if appropriate.</p> <p>A plan of safety should be discussed in the interim: alternative accommodation/place of safety referral/safety precautions/extra locks safety.</p>	
<p>IDVA</p> <p>Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service Oxford</p>	
<p>Safeguarding Referral</p>	<p><u>Raising a safeguarding concern - professional - Oxfordshire County Council</u></p>

<p>If you believe a resident is in immediate danger and requires emergency assistance, please ring 999.</p> <p>Where the safeguarding concern is not immediate, but poses an ongoing risk, please discuss with the Head of Operations.</p> <p>Examples of concerns may be:</p> <p>Physical abuse. Sexual abuse. Psychological abuse. Neglect. Domestic violence. Organisational abuse. Risk of radicalisation. Modern slavery trafficking (1 in 4 victims is a child). Discriminatory abuse. Domestic violence. Financial Abuse Self-neglect.</p> <p>In the absence of the Head of Operations, do not delay and make the referral ASAP.</p>	
<p>GP Practices</p> <p>This can be a first port of call for many residents, families, and staff if you have any concerns around support.</p>	<p>Various GP practices</p> <p>The Manor Surgery</p> <p>01865 762535</p>

<p>They can also make referrals to Adult Social Care or make safeguarding referrals.</p>	<p>manorsurgery@nhs.net</p> <p>Hedena - Bury Knowle Health Centre 01865 597023</p> <p>Hedena – Barton Health Centre <u>01865 227788</u></p> <p>Hedena – Woodfarm Health Centre <u>01865 227788</u></p> <p>Holloway Medical Centre 01865 777495</p> <p>East Oxford Health Centre <u>01865 904494</u></p> <p>St Bartholomew's Medical Centre 01865 242334</p>
<p>Drug and Alcohol Advice</p> <p>Some residents may experience issues around substance misuse, including drugs and alcohol.</p> <p>Staff can signpost residents for further support to local drug and alcohol services.</p> <p>Staff should also encourage residents to speak directly to their own GPs.</p>	<p>Turning Point Oxford</p> <p>Staff can make referrals on behalf of residents:</p> <p><u>Professional Referral Turning Point (turning-point.co.uk)</u></p>
<p>Mental Health Services</p> <p>If residents have concerns around their mental health, staff should</p>	<p>GPs</p> <p>Mind – Oxford</p>

<p>always encourage residents to contact their GPs.</p> <p>In severe cases where residents may not engage with staff concerns, please discuss with Head of Operations. We will then review and decide whether this should be highlighted to GP or Local Mental Health Teams/safeguarding teams.</p> <p>If residents are experiencing extreme mental health difficulties within the communal spaces, you can contact 999 if you believe they are putting themselves or others at risk.</p> <p>If the difficulties are at home and you are extremely concerned, you can contact the GP to organise a home visit or request an urgent home visit from one of the mental health crisis teams.</p>	<p>Drop-in day centres and activities and group sessions.</p> <p>Response – Oxford</p> <p>Drop-in day centres and activities and group sessions.</p> <p>Adult Mental Health Teams – AMHT</p> <p>Older Persons Mental Health Team – OPMHT (around Alzheimer's/Dementia)</p> <p>NHS Oxfordshire Talking Therapies – used to be Talking Space</p> <p>For people experiencing mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts</p> <p>Residents can self-refer or staff can assist with making referrals on link below:</p> <p>Self referral form NHS Oxfordshire Talking Therapies IAPT Portal</p> <p>Oxford Samaritans</p> <p>116 123 – Free from any phone</p> <p>0330 094 5717</p>
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