

TENANCY COMPLIANCE POLICY
(Domestic Abuse)

Policy Owner:
Chief Operating Officer

Accountable Lead:
Director of Housing & Support



Policy Control

Policy Level	Operational
Policy Reference	CS/HM (TS)/003/2013
Link to Strategy	Neighbourhood Services Strategy
Version Control V.1 Oct 22 New policy – previously part of single compliance policy (with ASB) - Policy effective dates formally extended by Chief Operating Officer	Effective from: December 2022 Effective till: December 2026
Approved by	Executive Director Customer Experience December 2022
Consultation	Resident engagement through Voicebox Nov 22
Equality analysis	Completed December 2022
Next review date	December 2026

Policy Statement

We believe that all residents have the right to live peacefully in their home. We are committed to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms and to support all customers who are victims of abuse.

We believe that our homes and neighbourhoods must be places where people can live without fear of harassment or abuse.

We treat all incidents of domestic abuse reported to us as high priority. We always work with victims, we respect their wishes and we take action where we have the power to do so.

1. Scope

This policy sets out the ways in which we deliver our commitment to tackling domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is an issue that affects all areas of our work. The policy deals specifically with circumstances where the perpetrator or the victim is a Curo tenant or a member of their household.

2. Responsibilities

The Board and Executive, through the Policy Owner, ensure that the policy delivers our strategic objectives and reflects our corporate values.

The Accountable Lead is accountable to the Executive for the effective implementation of the policy, so that

- The principles are achieved through appropriate team plans and objectives, and
- Procedures, with appropriate RACIs, translate the policy objectives into practice.

The Director of Accounts & Lettings has operational responsibility for delivering relevant procedures and practices in the lettings team.

Tenancy Compliance Case Managers , Case Advisors, Co-ordinators, Tenancy Support Co-ordinators and Livewell Officers are responsible for taking action under this policy.

3. Definitions

We define **Domestic Abuse** as:

any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (including sexual, physical, emotional, financial, psychological, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse) between people that are or have been partners or family members. It can affect everyone, married and unmarried people, people who live together or in different homes, young and old, straight and gay, women and men. It can cross generations, for example grown up children abusing their parents.

Domestic abuse includes forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Domestic abuse is very common. It can affect one in four women in their lifetimes, regardless of age, social class, race, disability or lifestyle.

Domestic abuse accounts for between 16% and one quarter of all recorded violent crime.

In any one year, there are 13 million separate incidents of physical violence or threats of violence against women from partners or former partners.

We also recognise the cross-government definition of domestic abuse:

Behaviour of a person towards another person is domestic abuse if they are both aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- (g) they are relatives.

Examples of the types of behaviour that meet our definitions of domestic abuse are at **Annex 1** to this policy.

Controlling behaviour is:

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

Coercive behaviour is:

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

4. Principles

One of our fundamental objectives as an organisation is that residents should feel safe and secure in their home.

Our principles in addressing domestic abuse are:

- We believe that no one should live in fear of abuse or violence.
- We adopt a victim centred approach throughout the process. We will create a safe environment where victims of domestic abuse are confident in approaching us, are encouraged to talk and are listened to and enabled to make informed decisions about their lives.
- We will investigate incidents thoroughly and involve the victim in action planning.
- Personal safety is a priority throughout our response to domestic abuse.
- We will respect and maintain confidentiality.

- Where victims have to leave their home as a consequence of domestic abuse we will seek to evict the perpetrator wherever possible.
- We recognise the value of partnership working. By working in partnership with other agencies we can provide timely and effective guidance and respond quickly to cases as they arise. Partnership working also helps us to enhance the safety and security of those involved, to increase the confidence and resilience of those affected and empower them to live independently.
- We provide colleagues 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.
- We offer support to perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour. With partner agencies, we will work with perpetrators to increase their motivation, skills and knowledge and build confidence and resilience to combat their abusive behaviour patterns.

5. Application

Reporting

We receive reports of domestic abuse in a number of different ways and our processes try to ensure that anyone affected can report abuse as easily as possible.

Reports may be made by the individual experiencing the abuse or by the perpetrator disclosing their own behaviour. It may be by a concerned neighbour, relative, or the police.

Suspected cases may be brought to our attention by repeat repairs, by repeated reports of loud noises, banging or shouting or by a member of staff noticing a change in behaviour of a resident.

Case management and investigation

We treat all reports of domestic abuse seriously, sympathetically and in confidence. All cases are different; our processes support colleagues to respond accordingly, whatever the situation, and to ensure that any action is customer led.

Where necessary, we actively seek additional information where needed: in particular, where a report has been made by a third party or where reports of noise or repeated repairs suggest that domestic abuse may be taking place.

When an individual experiencing domestic abuse discloses this to a colleague, we will:

- Ask them if they are in immediate danger; if there is immediate threat to life colleagues will encourage the individual to call the police, or call the police on their behalf.
- Find out if there are any vulnerable adults or children living at the property.
- If colleagues believe there is a safeguarding concern involving an adult at risk or a child living in the property where the domestic abuse is taking place, we have a duty of care to raise this concern with the Local Authority.
- Offer to meet the individual at a place that they feel safe. It is important to offer a location where they feel comfortable, and it may be that they would prefer to meet with someone of the same or opposite gender.
- Find out the safest way to contact them in the future
- Find out the name of the perpetrator and their relationship to the individual
- Help them to contact local and national support agencies, and where they can find more information on agencies to help them.

In all case management and investigation, we work closely with other local partners to tackle domestic abuse, including the police, local authorities, health services and domestic abuse agencies.

Tenancy and housing options

Re-housing options

Where the individual experiencing the abuse is unable to remain in their home owing to the ongoing presence of the abuser or the threat of future abuse, we ensure they are aware of various housing options available to them to access.

There may be occasions when temporary /emergency accommodation is required whilst safety measures are implemented. If emergency accommodation is required, the Compliance and support team will liaise directly with relevant agencies.

If permanent rehousing is agreed, then an application will be assessed and considered with the appropriate priority banding working in conjunction with the social needs panel of the relevant local authority.

Joint Tenancy Agreements

Where a tenancy is a joint one in both party's names, we will consider options available to the customer with them.

Rent arrears should never prevent a customer experiencing domestic abuse from moving; however rent arrears cannot be ignored and a repayment plan will need to be discussed at a later date.

Enabling the victim to stay in their home allows them to remain in contact with any support around them, avoiding potential isolation. Neither the victim nor perpetrator should be advised to terminate their tenancy. Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances and should be discussed with the Tenancies Manager.

The customer experiencing abuse may be able to access Family Law relief to remove a perpetrator from the home and we will signpost to relevant agencies.

Sole Tenancies

Where the tenancy is in the perpetrator's sole name, colleagues should ask the victim to complete a housing application and refer them to their local authority. The duty to provide immediate temporary accommodation lies with local authorities under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.

Where a customer experiencing abuse is not a Curo tenant we will refer them to the local authority, and offer advice and support through the Compliance and Support team.

When the tenancy is in the sole name of the customer experiencing domestic abuse then the Compliance and Support Team will provide guidance on the options available to them. If the customer experiencing the abuse wants the perpetrator to leave the home then we will provide support to them, in conjunction with our partners such as the Police and we will seek legal advice where appropriate.

Curo can provide lock changes and extra security measures to victims of domestic abuse, this can include extra window locks and bolts and chains to doors.

Domestic Abuse Procedures

Our policy is supported by detailed procedures.

6 Monitoring

Cases will be individually reviewed by case conferences where required and at one to one meetings with managers, to ensure that this policy is applied appropriately and consistently. Managers also carry out monthly checks via Quality Assurance Framework

Once the case is closed we will ask customers to participate in a satisfaction survey. This will be completed by way of a phone survey.

We record and monitor on:

- The number of cases.
- The diversity profile of complainants and perpetrators.
- The location of incidents.

- Response times
- Outcomes, for example: transfer, support provided.

We will use this information to improve on the services that we deliver, to prioritise the issues that residents tell us are important, and to make best use of the resources that we have.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

An EIA has been carried out as part of the process for producing this policy.

Tenancy Compliance (Domestic Abuse) Policy – Annex 1

Definitions of Domestic Abuse – some examples

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

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

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.

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.

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.

Discriminatory Abuse 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

The definition also 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. Coercive and controlling behaviour underpins all forms of 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.

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.

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.

Online Abuse: Online platforms are increasingly used to perpetrate domestic abuse. Online domestic abuse can include behaviours such as monitoring of social media profiles or emails, abuse over social media such as Facebook or Twitter, sharing intimate photos or videos without your consent, using GPs locators or spyware.