

Policy Title	Domestic Abuse Policy
Policy Lead	Gareth Ellis, Safer Neighbourhoods Manager
Policy Owner	Andrew Brown, Director of Housing and Specialist Living
Policy Aim	The policy outlines Onward's commitment to tackling domestic abuse and provides details on the approach, methods and support for victims and perpetrators.
Summary of Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onward is committed to tackling all forms of domestic abuse. • The policy covers tenants aged 16 and over in Onward properties. • Adopts the statutory definition of domestic abuse as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. • People with long-term illness or disability are recognised as being at increased risk of domestic abuse. • Onward has safeguarding responsibilities which is laid out in the separate safeguarding policies. • Training and support are provided to staff and contractors. • Victims and perpetrators can make complaints to Onward. • Any malicious complaints may result in action taken against complainant.
Further Information Available at	Safeguarding - Onward safeguarding.pdf (onward.co.uk)

Domestic Abuse Policy

1. Aim

- 1.1 Onward is committed to tackling all forms of Domestic Abuse. We will work in partnership within our neighbourhoods to support victims of Domestic Abuse and consider swift and appropriate enforcement action against perpetrators, using the relevant terms of our Tenancy Agreements. Onward recognises that Domestic Abuse cuts across social class, economic status, ethnicity and cultural background and can have a social, financial and health impact on victims.
- 1.2 Onward will publish a separate procedural document which sets out:
 - a. Details of our overall approach in relation to Domestic Abuse within our Neighbourhoods, including our approach to partnership working.
 - b. The methods we will use to tackle Domestic Abuse.
 - c. How we will support victims of Domestic Abuse.
 - d. How we will tackle perpetrators of Domestic Abuse living in an Onward property.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The policy covers any Tenant or other person who resides in a property owned or managed by Onward aged 16 or over. This policy covers all Onward staff including contractors and managing agents.
- 2.2 Onward adopts the statutory definition of Domestic Abuse 2021 as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:
 - (1) *This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.*
 - (2) *Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:*
 - (a) *A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and*
 - (b) *the behaviour is abusive.*
 - (3) *Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—*
 - (a) *physical or sexual abuse;*
 - (b) *violent or threatening behaviour;*
 - (c) *controlling or coercive behaviour;*
 - (d) *economic abuse;*
 - (e) *psychological, emotional or other abuse;**and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.*
 - (4) *“Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—*
 - (a) *acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or*
 - (b) *obtain goods or services.*

(5) *For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).*

(6) *References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.*

2.3 Onward will assist victims of Domestic Abuse and will meet key relevant legislative requirements, statutory guidance and regulatory standards as they apply:

- a. Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- b. Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- c. Equality Act 2010

3. Recognising Disability Impact

3.1 Onward recognise that people with long term illness or disability are at increased risk as victims of Domestic Abuse. People with drug, alcohol and/or suffering from Mental Health issues are at higher risk of being affected by Domestic Abuse. Appropriate steps to support people in these circumstances are set out in our procedural document.

4. Safeguarding Responsibilities

4.1 When Domestic Abuse is disclosed, we will be clear about confidentiality and our safeguarding obligations. It is preferable to get consent when making referrals for victims of Domestic Abuse and sharing information with external agencies. However, referrals can be made without consent for high-risk cases to MARAC without consent. Onward Homes has a separate Safeguarding Policy for adults and children.

5. Training and Support for Colleagues

5.1 Onward will provide awareness, policy and procedure training for relevant staff including contractors. Onward will ensure training is provided to all relevant staff on accurately recording cases and ensuring they are passed to the relevant team to manage.

6. Complaints

6.1 Victims and perpetrators of Domestic Abuse can make a complaint to Onward if they are unhappy with the way in which their case was managed. Onward will also advise complainants of their right to make contact with the Housing Ombudsman once our complaints process has been exhausted.

7. Dealing with Malicious, Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

7.1 All complainants have a responsibility not to make malicious or unreasonable complaints. We will consider taking action against anyone found to have made a malicious complaint.

8. Data Protection and Information Sharing

- 8.1 All information provided will be treated in the strictest of confidence and handled in line with our responsibilities under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, and in compliance with Onward's Data Protection Policy & procedures.
- 8.2 In certain circumstances Onward may need to share personal data with other statutory agencies. Where practical, consent from the individual will be obtained prior to information being shared, however there may be instances where Onward have a statutory duty to share information without an individual's consent e.g. if there is any reason to suspect children are at risk, there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone or for the prevention and detection of crime. An assessment will be made in each case to decide what information is necessary to be shared, referring to the Data Protection Officer for further guidance as required.

9. Responsibility and Monitoring

- 9.1 Onward's Regional Director (Greater Manchester) is responsible for overall adherence to this policy and Onward's Safer Neighbourhoods Manager is responsible for its implementation. Onward's Senior Leadership Team will receive regular reports on performance in relation to Domestic Abuse.

Linked documents:	Onward Domestic Abuse Procedure ASB Guidance Minimum Standards
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Date implemented:	January 2023
Policy Lead:	Gareth Ellis, Safer Neighbourhoods Manager
Approved by:	Executive Team
Approved on:	24 January 2023
Next review date:	January 2026

Reference number:	DOMA02
Version:	2.0
Document replaces:	Domestic Abuse Policy June 2020