

IronOak



IRON OAK

Domestic Abuse Policy

Control Sheet

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. IronOak Homes (IronOak) is committed to providing safe homes and services for all residents and maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is both a safeguarding issue and a housing management issue that can have significant impacts on individuals, families, children and communities.
- 1.2. We recognise that anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socio-economic background.
- 1.3. IronOak will take all disclosures, allegations, concerns and reports of domestic abuse seriously and will work with residents, local authorities, safeguarding agencies, police and specialist support organisations to ensure that victims receive appropriate support, protection and housing solutions.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This policy aims to:
 - Protect residents and household members from domestic abuse.
 - Enable victims and survivors to access support safely and confidentially.
 - Ensure a consistent, victim-centred and trauma-informed response.
 - Support victims to remain in their homes where safe and appropriate.
 - Facilitate access to alternative housing where remaining at home is unsafe.
 - Ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are implemented.
 - Promote partnership working and information sharing.
 - Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to:
 - All IronOak residents.
 - Household members.
 - Housing applicants.
 - Leaseholders where relevant.
 - Employees.
 - Contractors, consultants, volunteers and agency workers acting on behalf of IronOak .

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4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

4.1. This policy is informed by:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Care Act 2014.
- Housing Act 1996.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Statutory Guidance: Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse (2025).

5. Definition of Domestic Abuse

5.1. IronOak adopts the definition contained within Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected involving abuse.

5.2. This may include:

- Physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse.
- Psychological abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Economic or financial abuse.
- Coercive and controlling behaviour.
- Threatening behaviour.
- Harassment and stalking.
- Online or technology-facilitated abuse.
- Children who see, hear, experience, or are affected by domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right.

5.3. Domestic abuse may also overlap with safeguarding concerns identified within IronOak's Safeguarding Policy, including:

- Financial exploitation.

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- Neglect.
- Coercion.
- Tenancy abuse.
- Cuckooing.
- Discriminatory abuse.
- Exploitation of vulnerable adults.
- Forced marriage.
- Harmful practises

6. Guiding Principles

6.1. IronOak will:

- Put the safety of victims and children first.
- Treat all disclosures seriously.
- Take a non-judgemental, compassionate approach.
- Respect individual choices wherever possible.
- Ensure residents can make informed decisions about their housing options.
- Maintain confidentiality whilst recognising safeguarding obligations.
- Work collaboratively with partner agencies.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Recognise the long-term impact domestic abuse can have on physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.
- Ensure that when offering placements to new residents in shared environments, or with shared communal areas, that a risk based approach is taken to ensure the safety of all residents.
- Support residents to access relevant and specific support and information, including Claires Law.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1. Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for:

- Providing strategic oversight.
- Monitoring policy compliance.

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- Reviewing domestic abuse performance and outcomes.
- Ensuring sufficient resources are available to support victims.

7.2. Head of Operations

The Head of Operations is the designated safeguarding lead for domestic abuse matters and is responsible for:

- Oversight of all high-risk domestic abuse cases.
- Safeguarding decision making.
- Liaison with statutory agencies.
- Monitoring compliance with this policy.
- Ensuring staff are trained appropriately.
- Reviewing serious incidents and lessons learned.

7.3. Managers

Managers must:

- Ensure staff understand this policy.
- Monitor compliance.
- Escalate concerns immediately.
- Support staff managing domestic abuse cases.
- Ensure referrals are made within required timescales.

7.4. Employees

All employees have an absolute responsibility to:

- Recognise signs of domestic abuse.
- Report concerns immediately.
- Follow safeguarding procedures.
- Maintain accurate records.
- Attend mandatory training.
- Act in the best interests of residents and children at risk.

8. Recognising Domestic Abuse

8.1. Indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries.

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- Fearful, withdrawn or anxious behaviour.
- Isolation from family or support networks.
- Sudden financial difficulties.
- Repeated reports of neighbour disputes involving violence.
- Damage to property.
- Frequent requests for emergency accommodation.
- Evidence of coercive or controlling behaviour.
- Indicators of tenancy abuse, exploitation or cuckooing.

8.2. The presence of one or more indicators does not confirm abuse but should prompt further enquiry and assessment.

9. Reporting Concerns and Disclosures

9.1. Immediate Response

When a disclosure is made, staff must:

- Listen carefully and respectfully.
- Reassure the individual they have been heard.
- Avoid judgement or blame.
- Explain safeguarding responsibilities.
- Avoid promising absolute confidentiality.
- Record information accurately using the victim's own words wherever possible.

9.2. Internal Reporting

All domestic abuse concerns must be reported immediately to:

1. The employee's line manager.
2. The Head of Operations.

This mirrors the reporting requirements within IronOak's Safeguarding Policy.

10. Emergency Situations

10.1. Where immediate danger exists:

- Contact emergency services by calling 999.
- Take reasonable steps to secure immediate safety.

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- Preserve any evidence.
- Notify line management and the Head of Operations without delay.

11. Risk Assessment and Safety Planning

11.1. Following a disclosure, IronOak will undertake or facilitate a risk assessment which will consider:

- Immediate safety risks.
- Risks to children.
- Risks to vulnerable adults.
- Housing-related risks.
- Risks posed by the alleged perpetrator.
- Ongoing safeguarding concerns.

11.2. Where appropriate, an individual safety plan will be developed.

11.3. Safety planning may include:

- Emergency contact arrangements.
- Security upgrades.
- Alternative accommodation.
- Specialist support referrals.
- Police involvement.
- Safeguarding referrals.
- MARAC referrals for high-risk cases.

12. Safeguarding

12.1. Domestic abuse must always be considered within the context of safeguarding responsibilities.

12.2. Where concerns are identified involving:

- Children,
- Vulnerable adults,
- Adults with care and support needs,

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12.3. staff must follow the Safeguarding Adults & Children in Adult Settings Policy and refer concerns through the appropriate safeguarding routes.

12.4. IronOak will:

- Share information appropriately.
- Participate in safeguarding enquiries.
- Cooperate with safeguarding partners.
- Support residents throughout safeguarding processes.

13. Supporting Residents to Remain Safely in Their Home

13.1. Where the victim wishes to remain in their home and an assessment determines that this is safe and appropriate, IronOak will consider measures that may improve safety.

13.2. These may include:

- Additional locks.
- Reinforced doors and windows.
- Security lighting.
- CCTV.
- Intercom systems.
- Door entry systems.
- Sanctuary scheme measures.
- Fire safety equipment.

13.3. Residents will never be pressured to remain in a property solely to reduce housing demand or minimise service pressures.

14. Housing and Rehousing Options

14.1. Where it is unsafe to remain in the current accommodation, IronOak will work with residents and relevant agencies to explore:

- Emergency accommodation.
- Refuge accommodation.
- Sanctuary schemes.

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- Temporary accommodation.
- Direct lets.
- Management transfers.
- Reciprocal moves.
- Applications for social housing.

14.2. IronOak recognises that victims may need to relocate outside their local area and should not be disadvantaged as a result of fleeing domestic abuse.

15. Domestic Abuse and Tenancy Management

15.1. IronOak will consider all available tenancy management options to protect victims and support recovery.

15.2. Where appropriate we may:

- Seek enforcement action against perpetrators.
- Support injunctions and occupation orders.
- Liaise with police and local authorities.
- Review tenancy arrangements.
- Support victims to retain security of tenure in line with legislation.

15.3. Particular attention will be given to cases involving:

- Cuckooing.
- Coercive tenancy abuse.
- Financial exploitation.
- Unauthorised occupation linked to abuse.
- Exploitation of vulnerable tenants.

16. MARAC and Partnership Working

16.1. IronOak recognises that effective support requires strong partnership working.

16.2. We will work with:

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- Local authorities.
- Police.
- Social services.
- Health services.
- Domestic abuse support organisations.
- Refuges.
- Safeguarding Boards.
- Child protection services.
- Probation services.
- MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) arrangements where appropriate.

16.3. Where lawful and necessary, information will be shared to protect victims and reduce risk.

17. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

17.1. IronOak acknowledges the sensitive nature of domestic abuse disclosures.

17.2. Information will:

- Be processed in accordance with UK GDPR.
- Be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Be securely recorded.
- Be disclosed only where lawful and proportionate.
- Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where:
- A child is at risk.
- A vulnerable adult is at risk.
- A serious crime may have occurred.
- There is a risk of serious harm to any person.

17.3. All information sharing decisions must be documented.

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18. Mental Capacity

18.1. IronOak recognises its obligations under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

18.2. Where there are concerns regarding an individual's ability to make decisions:

- Capacity assessments must be undertaken by appropriate professionals.
- Decisions must be made in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Advocacy support will be facilitated where appropriate.
- Safeguarding procedures will continue to apply where concerns of abuse exist.

19. Staff Support

19.1. IronOak recognises that domestic abuse may also affect employees.

19.2. Employees affected by domestic abuse may be offered:

- Confidential support.
- Flexible working arrangements.
- Adjustments to working practices.
- Time off for legal, medical or housing appointments.
- Referrals to specialist services.
- Workplace safety planning.

20. Training

20.1. IronOak will ensure that:

- All staff receive safeguarding training.
- Staff receive domestic abuse awareness training.
- Managers receive enhanced safeguarding training.
- Training is refreshed regularly.
- Specialist staff receive additional training relevant to their roles.

20.2. No employee will undertake lone working with vulnerable residents until required safeguarding training has been completed.

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21. Monitoring and Review

21.1. IronOak will monitor:

- Domestic abuse reports.
- Safeguarding referrals.
- MARAC referrals.
- Rehousing outcomes.
- Training compliance.
- Complaints and compliments.
- Lessons learned from serious incidents.

21.2. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required due to legislative, regulatory or organisational changes.

22. Key Contacts

- **Emergency Services:** 999
- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline (Refuge)**
0808 2000 247
- **Men's Advice Line**
0808 801 0327
- **Victim Support**
0808 168 9111
- **NSPCC Helpline**
0808 800 5000
- **IronOak Safeguarding Lead**
Head of Operations

This policy should be read in conjunction with IronOak Safeguarding Adults & Children in Adult Settings Policy and reflects the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Government's 2025 statutory guidance on improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse.

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