

Domestic Abuse Policy

Pinnacle Group



1. Introduction

This policy explains how Pinnacle Group responds to domestic abuse. It sets out how we will support people affected by domestic abuse and what action we may take.

We aim to support anyone who has experienced domestic abuse in a sensitive, understanding and non-judgemental way, based on their individual needs.

This policy applies to all Pinnacle residents and household members. This includes shared owners, leaseholders and people living in properties managed by Pinnacle. A household member means anyone who lives permanently at the property, regardless of how long they have lived there.

Some adults experiencing domestic abuse may also need safeguarding support, for example if they have additional vulnerabilities such as a disability. In these cases, we will make a referral to Adult Services. Children living in a household where domestic abuse is taking place will always need safeguarding support, and we will refer them to Children's Services in every case. Our safeguarding approach is designed to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and children who are experiencing, or may be at risk of, abuse or neglect.

If a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse, we will offer support and advice in line with our Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy.

Pinnacle is committed to making sure our services and ways of working meet the needs of all customers. This is especially important for customers with disabilities, or temporary or short-term conditions, who may otherwise be disadvantaged. To support this, we will make reasonable adjustments where needed. These may include changes to premises, changes to policies or procedures, or providing information in different ways to meet individual needs. We will aim to make sure our services are accessible to customers with disabilities and to those without disabilities.

Pinnacle recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Act does not define exactly what a "reasonable adjustment" is. The Equality and Human Rights Commission recommends considering the following when deciding what is reasonable:

- How well the adjustment would reduce or remove the disadvantage the customer may face.
- How practical the adjustment would be.
- Whether the adjustment would cause any disruption.
- The financial and other costs of making the adjustment.
- The resources Pinnacle already has available.
- Whether financial support or other help is available.

If Pinnacle is told that a condition or situation is disadvantaging a customer, or someone in their household, we will consider reasonable adjustments to the way we deliver our services. We will look at each case based on the information available and in line with Pinnacle's Vulnerability Policy and Aids and Adaptations Policy. We will not make assumptions about what a customer needs or what adjustments may be suitable. We will aim to agree and deliver adjustments within a reasonable timescale that works for everyone. In some cases, there may be a delay while we get specialist advice. If this happens, we will keep the customer updated.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Support is available for all colleagues dealing with domestic abuse cases. If you need to speak to someone after dealing with a case, you can contact Pinnacle’s Employee Assistance Programme.

2. Key Objectives

This section explains the main aims of the policy and what Pinnacle wants to achieve by putting it into practice.

All colleagues and managers are responsible for helping to meet these aims.

No	Domestic Abuse Policy Key Objectives
1	Make sure customers and household members experiencing domestic abuse can contact Pinnacle in confidence. They should know that colleagues will believe them, listen to them and offer support.
2	Make sure all reports of domestic abuse from a customer or household member are taken seriously and treated as a high priority, in line with Pinnacle’s safeguarding policies, Domestic Abuse Policy and related procedure.
3	Build close working relationships with local authorities and specialist advice and support agencies.
4	Put customers in touch with the right agencies for specialist advice and support.
5	Keep a clear and easy-to-understand policy and procedure that explains the support Pinnacle can offer to customers affected by domestic abuse.

3. Legal Framework

The main laws, case law, national standards and guidance that apply to registered provider policy and practice are:

- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Family Law Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS – also known as Clare’s Law)
- Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)
- The Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

4. Definitions

Pinnacle uses the definition of **domestic abuse** in Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This Act introduced a legal definition of domestic abuse for the first time.

Domestic abuse can be a single incident, a course of conduct or a pattern of abusive behaviour. It applies where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, for example because they are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. It applies regardless of gender or sexuality. Children are also victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either person. Behaviour is abusive if it includes any of the following:

- Physical abuse. This can include hitting, punching, kicking, slapping, using objects to cause harm, pulling hair, pushing or shoving, cutting or stabbing, restraining, spitting, strangulation or choking.
- Sexual abuse. This can include rape, coerced sex, forcing someone to take part in unwanted sexual acts, refusing to practise safe sex or use contraception, and threatened or actual sexual abuse of children.
- Violent or threatening behaviour.
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Economic abuse. This can include controlling money and bank accounts, making someone account for all their spending, running up debts in their name, giving them no say over how money is spent, or stopping them from studying or working. Economic abuse means behaviour that has a serious negative effect on someone's ability to get, use or keep money or other property, or to get goods or services.
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse. Domestic abuse can have a serious impact on victims and their children. It can leave someone with little confidence that they can change their situation.

This includes incidents where the abusive person directs their behaviour at someone else, for example a child.

5. Policy Principles

Customers can report domestic abuse to us in different ways. A report may come from the person experiencing abuse, someone in their household, a concerned neighbour or relative, or the police.

We may also identify possible domestic abuse through repeat repairs or damage to the property, reports of loud noise, banging or shouting, or if a colleague notices a change in a resident's behaviour or appearance.

We treat all reports of domestic abuse seriously and confidentially. Every case is different, so colleagues will respond based on the circumstances. We may need to gather more information, especially where a report has come from someone else.

We will investigate all reports we receive and respond within one working day.

We will make sure relevant colleagues receive specialist domestic abuse training at the right level for their role.

We will support all customers experiencing domestic abuse, regardless of age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, social background or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

We will work with partners to support people experiencing domestic abuse. Where appropriate, we may take action against perpetrators, but only where this can be done without putting the person experiencing abuse at greater risk.

We take a customer-centred approach when working with individuals, family members and representatives. We will support people, assess their circumstances and respect everyone's confidentiality. However, the safety of the person experiencing abuse is the most important consideration. If a Pinnacle colleague witnesses an incident or offence, they must call the police immediately. If there is a high risk of serious harm or homicide, we will share relevant and proportionate information with statutory and non-statutory services to reduce that risk. This may include making a safeguarding referral for children or adults.

At first contact, we will aim to complete a risk assessment using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist. We will also create an action plan to support the person experiencing domestic abuse, their children and anyone else considered to be at risk.

We will share information with other agencies in line with the Data Protection Act and UK GDPR. This may include sharing relevant and proportionate information without the customer's consent, where appropriate.

Where needed, we will arrange or attend multi-agency meetings so that all relevant agencies can offer support.

People experiencing abuse can ask to speak to a colleague of the same sex and, where possible, the same ethnic origin. We will provide translation services where needed.

People experiencing abuse can meet colleagues confidentially at our offices or at another safe place agreed with them. At first contact, we will also agree a safe method and time for contacting them.

For joint tenancies, the perpetrator may have the right to access the tenancy file. We will take steps to protect confidential information, such as recording the case anonymously so it is not linked to the tenancy and redacting confidential information. This helps prevent the perpetrator, or anyone representing them, from seeing sensitive information.

We will work with partner agencies to improve security at a resident's home, where appropriate and where client approval is needed. This may include target hardening, where available.

We will refer customers to relevant internal teams for support with financial issues, and to the relevant local authority for housing options advice.

We will signpost people experiencing domestic abuse to organisations that can provide legal advice, where appropriate.

We will refer people experiencing domestic abuse to external agencies that can offer further advice and support based on their needs. We will use specialist "by and for" services where appropriate.

Where evidence is available, we will take action against anyone responsible for domestic abuse. We will only do this where it can be done without putting the person experiencing abuse at greater risk. We will work closely with partner agencies and keep them informed of any action we take.

We will provide general housing advice to perpetrators when requested. If the perpetrator is the tenant of the property, we will consider appropriate tenancy action, which may include ending the tenancy.

With their permission, we will report incidents to the police on behalf of people experiencing abuse, or support them to report incidents themselves if they feel too intimidated to do so. We will also offer third-party reporting services if requested.

Where emergency temporary accommodation is needed, we will support the person experiencing abuse to contact the Homeless Person's Unit of their choice. This may also include a referral to refuges through the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

6. Notification of a Coroner's Inquiry or a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR)

If Pinnacle is told about a Coroner's Inquiry or a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR), the following steps must be taken straight away:

- Tell the Executive Team and the Divisional Director of Operations.
- Collect information from all relevant files about the household and its contact with Pinnacle services.
- Appoint a senior manager to oversee the request and represent Pinnacle at any meetings or hearings.

Ask the Data and Information Governance Team to help gather information for any Subject Access Requests.

The Divisional Director of Operations is responsible for putting in place any lessons learned and recommendations from a Coroner's Inquiry or DHR.

7. Associated Policies and Procedures

- Domestic Abuse Procedure
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy Statement and Procedure
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy Statement and Guidance
- Data Protection Policy Statement and Procedure
- Decant Policy Guidance Document and Procedure
- Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy
- Joint Tenancies Procedure
- Lone Working Procedure
- Mutual Exchange Policy and Procedure
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Vulnerability Policy

8. Zero Tolerance

Pinnacle has zero tolerance for threats, abuse, aggression, discriminatory behaviour or violence towards our colleagues and contractors. If someone behaves in this way towards anyone working for or on behalf of Pinnacle, we will take immediate action. This may include legal action. Perpetrators may be:

- Reported to the police.
- Limited to specific ways of contacting us.
- Banned from attending Pinnacle premises.
- Have services temporarily withdrawn while we put measures in place to protect colleagues and contractors.

9. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

We will monitor key performance indicators at directorate and local team level. Where appropriate, we will ask customers for feedback when we close a domestic abuse case, so we can identify ways to improve our service.

We will review this policy at least every three years. We may review it sooner if there are changes in legislation, business needs, sector requirements or good practice.

10. Diversity and Inclusion

Pinnacle will treat all customers fairly and with respect. We recognise our ethical and legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We can translate or interpret this policy and any related documents, or provide them in accessible formats, where needed.