



# Domestic Abuse and the Letting Industry

*How you can make  
a difference*





Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

# Introduction

This guide has been created for lettings agents in collaboration with [DAHA \(Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance\)](#).

Domestic abuse continues to be a key issue in today's society - 2 million people suffer from domestic violence every year, a quarter of all women in England and Wales will experience it at some point in their lives. **On average 2 women a week die at the hands of their partner or ex-partner** - a statistic which hasn't changed in over 20 years.

Awareness in the housing sector is exactly what DAHA has been created for. It is a partnership between UK charity Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, and housing associations Peabody and the Gentoo Group.

This is where the private rental sector comes in. You may not be aware that more families with children are now housed in private rented accommodation than social housing. As a letting agent you could improve and, potentially, save lives by increasing your awareness of the signs of domestic abuse as well as knowing what can be done about it. You may be one of the first people to spot signs of abuse and help.

This checklist covers:

- **What domestic abuse is**
- **What you need to be aware of**
- **What steps you can take to help someone**

It's important to be aware you're not under any legal obligation to report domestic abuse, however landlord professional bodies including ARLA, RLA and NLA are all working closely with DAHA to increase awareness and confidence for lettings agents. It's likely in the future there will be training available with these bodies, so this checklist is a great starting point for that.

---

**You can help** by understanding how important it is to take domestic abuse seriously, to make sure potential warning signs are not ignored and to offer an understanding and confidential response to those who approach you for assistance in these cases. Your awareness could be the critical factor.

---

# What constitutes domestic abuse?

It's important to remember that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. Domestic abuse covers any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. The abuse can be:

- **Psychological** (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
- **Financial**
- **Emotional**

**Victoria Watts from DAHA believes that the housing sector is ideally placed to identify, recognise and prevent domestic abuse in their properties:**



“DAHA believes that property managers have a vital part to play in raising awareness of domestic abuse and in supporting anyone who may be experiencing domestic abuse. We are certainly not proposing that managers directly intervene and offer the same response as a social housing provider. Instead property managers should consider a softer approach but one that really can make a positive difference. Don't ignore potential signs and be reassured that there is help and advice out there for both yourself and your tenant.”

You can find out more about DAHA and the amazing work they do here:  
<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/>

**David Cox, ARLA Propertymark Chief Executive had this to say:**



“We must all work together to try and eliminate domestic violence. Letting agents deal with people's homes and therefore may spot some of the tell-tale signs of domestic abuse during inspections and property visits. Helping agents to understand how to spot these signs and, in what can be very difficult personal situations, educating them on how to respond is really important”.

# What do you need to be aware of?

It's quite possible you've already had an incident of domestic abuse reported to you without being aware of it. It can often come through initially as reports of alleged anti-social behaviour, noise complaints or property damage.

It's important also to address existing preconceptions around domestic abuse. One of the key questions often asked is "why don't they just leave?". There are a huge number of factors that come in to play which are all reasons why people don't leave relationships - it's not going to be your job to counsel anyone through this process. In the next section we'll cover what you should do instead. Be aware that leaving an abusive relationship is potentially one of the most dangerous times for a victim, the perpetrator suddenly loses control and power - which domestic abuse is all about - and this can lead to a huge upswing in violence and, potentially, death. So ensure that you pass the matter onto experts to support the victim.

You could have a tenant in your property who has left an abusive relationship but is still being bothered by their ex-partner. Consider how you can help them keep their property safe.

As a letting manager these can all be red flags to look out for as signs of domestic abuse:

- **Anti-social behaviour reports**
- **Noise complaints** - rows late at night, smashing or breaking things
- **Recurring repairs to:**
  - Internal doors
  - Wall
  - Windows
  - External doors
  - Locks

---

**Did you know** - something as simple as sharing local and national support numbers could save a life? People often don't know where to turn to for help. The National Domestic Violence Helpline number is **0808 2000 247** (open 24 hours, 7 days a week [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk))



# What steps can you take to help?



## 1. At the beginning of a tenancy

- At the start of a tenancy include information in your welcome pack with details on local and national domestic abuse support services (Fixflo will be creating a flyer in the future to share). The National Domestic Violence Helpline number is 0808 2000 247
- If at the beginning of a tenancy a history of domestic abuse is disclosed, consider offering them additional security measures. Local councils offer Sanctuary Schemes, which are multi-agency victim centre support to help households at risk to stay in their own homes. Here are some examples of extra measures that could be offered, with permission from the landlord:

- New door locks
- Security locks
- Window locks
- Door viewer
- Security lights

- Make it clear to new tenants (and existing ones) they can contact you in confidence



## *Domestic Abuse and the Letting Industry*

### **How you can make a difference**

---

## **2. During a tenancy**

- If approached by a tenant or neighbour with concerns about domestic abuse have the relevant support numbers to hand and encourage them to use them.
- With your tenant's explicit consent, and if you feel comfortable to, you could contact the national helpline on their behalf.
- After doing this you can check they've been given the right specialist support and make it clear that it can be possible for them to stay in their own home
- Be aware that you need to contact them on their own terms as letters, emails and phone calls could be intercepted by their abuser. Check which they'd be most happy with, if any
- If there is a risk to children or young people you can seek appropriate help and advice and refer to services such as Children's Social Services teams
- If you feel there is an imminent risk to your tenant's safety or welfare then do phone 999

## **3. Involving your staff**

- Share this checklist!
- Access further training via DAHA and other information available online
- Ensure that you're supporting your own staff members who may be suffering domestic abuse themselves and [implement a staff policy](#)
- Increase awareness with staff outside of your office too. They are coming into contact with your tenants every day and often will be the very first who are made aware of issues. This can include:

- Concierge
- Cleaners
- Window Cleaners
- Maintenance team



# What is Fixflo?

Fixflo is a market leading repair reporting software which is guaranteed to streamline your maintenance workflow. With over 40 languages to choose from, tenants can use their mobile device to report repairs through Fixflo's picture based system. Inbuilt guided advice educates tenants of their responsibilities, allowing them to fix small issues themselves.

A clear, concise repair report is then sent to the right property manager in seconds, saving time and money for everyone involved! Including all the benefits of Fixflo, Fixflo Plus features a centralised dashboard which provides you with a detailed overview of your entire portfolio. Fixflo Plus also automates reminders to contractors, ensuring swift issue resolution.

Fixflo Plus also provides agents with clear, concise repair reports which contain all the information needed to manage a repair to resolution. Because Fixflo repair reports contain all the detail needed, contractors can prepare for the specific issue at hand, meaning that most issues can be resolved in first contractor visit. A complete audit trail of all communication and documentation is safely stored in the system, ensuring that no issue slips through the cracks.

**If you'd like to find out more about the Fixflo product range, visit [www.fixflo.com](http://www.fixflo.com).**

Get in touch

[info@fixflo.com](mailto:info@fixflo.com)

0207 183 1222



[www.fixflo.com](http://www.fixflo.com)

