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# Domestic Abuse Policy

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## 1. Purpose

**1.1** The aim of this policy is to set out the Organisation's position on domestic abuse and explain the support we can offer to employees experiencing domestic abuse.

**1.2** Domestic abuse against any of our members of staff will not be tolerated. The Organisation understands the risks and consequences of domestic abuse and we will take all reasonable action to support any member of staff who is the subject of domestic abuse. When an employee raises the issue of domestic abuse the organisation and its managers will make every effort to respond in a sensitive, non-judgmental, confidential and effective way.

**1.3** We acknowledge our duty of care towards our employees and understand that this includes a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment; we appreciate that tackling domestic abuse is an integral part of this.

**1.4** We will work hard to foster a supportive workplace culture where employees can feel able to talk openly about their experiences if they wish to and can obtain the right support if they need it.

## 2. Definition

**2.1.** Domestic abuse is defined across government as any incident 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 regardless of their gender or sexuality.

**2.2.** Domestic abuse covers, but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional forms of abuse

**2.3.** Controlling behaviour can involve 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.

**2.4.** 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 a person.

**2.5.** The definition is inclusive of intimate partner violence and wider familial abuse.

## 3. Signs that someone may be experiencing domestic abuse

**3.1** Signs which may indicate that someone is experiencing domestic abuse may include:

- frequent absence from work, lateness or needing to leave work early
- reduced quality and quantity of work or missing deadlines

- spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason
- changes in the way an employee communicates - a large number of personal calls or texts or a strong reaction to personal calls
- physical signs and symptoms such as unexplained or frequent bruises or other injuries
- excessive clothing on a hot day
- changes in the amount of make-up worn
- changes in social behaviour, for example, not turning up to work social activities
- obsession with leaving work on time

**3.2** Managers and colleagues should be alert and supportive. But they should also be respectful of employees' privacy. The Organisation respects the employee's right to privacy if they do not wish to tell the Organisation that they are or have been experiencing domestic abuse.

#### **4. Action to be taken if an employee confides in a manager in the Organisation**

**4.1** The manager should offer reassurance to the employee regarding the Organisation's stance towards domestic abuse and outline the support that is to be offered. The manager will not ask the employee for evidence of abuse. If requested by the employee, the manager will arrange for another manager of the same sex as the employee, or the Wellbeing Manager, to offer support. Any discussion about the abuse must take place in private.

**4.2** Confidentiality is of utmost importance for managers dealing with an employee who informs them that they are experiencing domestic abuse. However, sometimes, the manager may need to discuss with the employee disclosing the information confidentially to HR or the Wellbeing Manager so that they can provide more expert support. Information may also be disclosed with care to protect a child, if the employee is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if required by law.

**4.3** The manager should not directly involve themselves in the situation by, for example, confronting someone accused of being abusive. This could make the situation more difficult for the employee. Instead, the role of the manager in this situation is:

- to provide support to the employee in the workplace
- to help the employee find professional help

**4.4** In terms of practical assistance, the organisation may consider the following:

- arrange for the employee's telephone extension number to be changed if the employee is receiving harassing telephone calls
- improve security measures such as changing security door codes and reminding other staff not to disclose staff contact, personal details or work patterns to others
- agree with the employee how they should respond if the perpetrator attends the workplace
- ensure that the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
- check that the employee has arrangements for safe travel between home and the workplace
- keep a record of incidents which occur in the workplace, e.g., harassing telephone calls or visits

- consider a temporary change to the employee's working patterns so these are not predictable to others
- consider providing other staff with details of the abuser so they can provide an alert if the abuser attends the workplace
- discuss whether the employee needs any time off to attend professional services etc. (see below)
- discuss with the employee what further reasonable temporary changes might support them
- any action should be discussed and agreed with the employee

#### **4.5** Managers should:

- not blame the person experiencing domestic abuse
- be non-judgmental and supportive; and
- respect the employee's privacy

**4.6** It may be helpful in this situation if the employee is encouraged to speak to a professional support organisation. Depending on the employee's situation, they may also need to attend meetings with advisors and to arrange new accommodation and education for their children. The line manager may help by allowing reasonable paid time off work for visits to take place confidentially to any suitable organisation and for time off as required for court hearings, legal meetings and/or to arrange housing/alternative education provision etc.

Where possible the employee should request time off in advance with their line manager. It is at the Organisation's discretion how much of the time off provided can be paid and this should be discussed in advance.

## **5. Action to be taken if the manager suspects that an employee is being subjected to domestic abuse**

**5.1** Suspicions that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse must be treated in a careful, balanced, and sensitive manner where the employee has not raised this. The line manager should facilitate a conversation to discuss the issue on a general level. If the employee confirms that they are experiencing domestic abuse, the manager should follow those guidelines set out above.

## **6. Professional help**

**6.1** The line manager should refer the employee (where agreed) to the Wellbeing Manager who will ensure the employee is encouraged to seek professional help

**6.2** The line manager may assist by allowing time off work for the employee to visit specialist organisations, as set out above.

## **7. Perpetrators of domestic abuse**

**7.1** The Organisation will not tolerate domestic abuse by its employees, nor the use of any of our equipment to carry out such abuse and this will be made clear to the perpetrator if the Organisation becomes aware of this. The Organisation will take seriously any allegations towards an employee of domestic abuse and investigations may lead to disciplinary action being taken in line with the Organisation's disciplinary policy.

**7.2** When speaking with an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse, a manager should, if considered necessary, take measures to ensure their own safety such as taking another member of staff to a discussion.

**7.3** If an employee who is a perpetrator of domestic abuse informs the Organisation about their abusive behaviour, the Organisation will provide information about professional services and support available to them and encourage them to seek support and help from such services, if it is evident that they want to address their behaviour.

**7.4** If both the individual experiencing domestic abuse and the perpetrator work for the Organisation, measures will be taken to reduce the impact after discussion with the individual experiencing the abuse, such as:

- reassigning duties/roles; and
- restricting the perpetrator's access to information about the person they are targeting

**7.5** HR will keep confidential records of any disclosure or action taken in relation to an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse.

## 8. Summary of action steps if domestic abuse is disclosed

