

Domestic Abuse Guidance



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Introduction

Domestic Abuse is an issue which affects all sections of society, and it is therefore important that we have clear and effective responses to help minimise the impact of domestic abuse on our employees.

This guidance demonstrates Unity Schools Partnership's and our School's commitment to support employees experiencing domestic abuse. The content has been written to:

- Raise awareness of domestic abuse and the impact it has on the individual and the organisation.
- Contribute to the health and wellbeing of employees in order that they can enjoy fulfilling lives both at work and home.
- Increase awareness of domestic abuse and help them to recognise when an employee is experiencing abuse and what support and action can be implemented.
- Provide clear, consistent and accurate advice to employees experiencing domestic abuse.
- Where a child discloses that someone is being abused at home, follow child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures.

This guidance applies equally to all adults who require advice or help. The Home Office (2013) definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

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 regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological • Physical • Sexual • Financial • Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: 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.

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 their victim. This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

*Parents are also victims of abuse from their children. Where employees are being abused by their children they can expect to receive the same or additional provision and support as other employees in domestic abuse situations.

COMMITMENT BY Unity Schools Partnership

Unity Schools Partnership has a zero-tolerance approach in respect of violence or abuse towards its employees, including domestic abuse, and will ensure the provision of caring and

non-judgemental support for those who suffer it.

Where an employee is suspected of a domestic abuse offence this may, dependent on the situation, be a cause for instigation of the Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

Where both parties are involved in a domestic abuse incident and work within the trust the incident will be managed in line with the relevant policies and procedures.

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. It can take many forms including:

Psychological/Emotional

- Intimidation, insulting, isolating a person from friends and family, criticising, denying abuse, treating them as inferior, threatening to harm children or take them away, forced marriage. Swearing, undermining confidence, making racist remarks, making a person feel unattractive, calling them stupid or useless, and eroding their independence, threatening suicide if the person leaves them.

Sexual

- Forced sex, forced prostitution, ignoring religious prohibitions about sex, refusal to practice safe sex, sexual insults, sexually transmitted infections, preventing breastfeeding, forced to be filmed or photographed naked.

Physical

- Shaking, smacking, punching, kicking, grabbing and biting, starving, tying up, stabbing, suffocation, throwing things, using objects as weapons, female genital mutilation, 'honour violence'. (Physical effects are often on areas of the body that are covered and hidden.)

Financial

- Not letting a person work, undermining their efforts to find work or study, refusing to give them money, asking for an explanation of how every penny is spent, making them beg for money, gambling, not paying bills.

It is important to remember that you are not to blame and you are not alone. You can get emotional and practical support for yourself and for any children you may have. You can get support for housing, finances, legal orders and personal safety.

Ring one of the services listed in [Appendix 2](#) for more information on how they can help you or visit [domestic abuse Suffolk](#); [domestic abuse Cambridge](#); [domestic abuse Essex](#); [domestic abuse Havering](#).

You can also contact Unity Schools Partnership Employee Assistance Programme and Counselling Service; Lifeworks on 0800 169 1920 (24/7, 365 days a year) or please contact HRhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk for login details to the website wellbeing.lifeworks.com/uk/

If domestic abuse is affecting your health and wellbeing, your work or you are at risk of further abuse while carrying out your work duties you should speak to your manager.

This guide provides information and advice for managers on how they can support you.

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

Employees who are experiencing domestic abuse may not feel able to tell people at work of their situation or approach their manager. However other issues such as frequent absence from work, poor performance or an employee's partner frequently contacting them at work, may alert a manager to the possibility that the underlying cause of these circumstances, could be domestic abuse. Managers should take this into account in considering how to deal with the situation. If there is an underlying cause which has been identified, then offering appropriate support may mean that the employee is able to deal with their situation more effectively.

Recognising when an employee may need help

The following are some of the possible signs that an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse. However, it is important to remember that everyone reacts in different ways:

- Comes to work repeatedly with injuries
- Heavy make up to cover injuries
- Unusual number of calls from home and strong reaction to the call
- Late for work and needing to leave early – or the opposite and not wanting to go home
- Secretive about home life
- Frequent absenteeism
- A drop in the level of their performance or productivity at work.
- Emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous, confused
- Partner, ex-partner or other family member exerts unusual amount of control over their life
- May be extremely passive or aggressive
- May seem chronically depressed or depressed in cycles
- May isolate themselves at work. The most important sign that something is wrong is that a person may begin to behave in a way that is unusual for them.

CONFIDENTIALITY

For employees experiencing and receiving support for domestic abuse, it must remain confidential as far as it is reasonably practicable within our duties as an employer. Once an employee has confided to their line manager that they are experiencing domestic abuse, the manager should reassure them that they will keep this information confidential, unless the employee gives express permission to disclose information or there are circumstances that warrant sharing information. This could include where there are child protection issues. If an employee gives information that suggests that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk from abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect), the manager should inform the employee that they will be referring to the designated safeguarding lead / local authority designated safeguarding officer in accordance with Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER

Managers should be mindful that a sensitive approach is required and ensure the employee is offered support if domestic abuse is an issue that has been disclosed to them. Managers should:

- Ensure discussions take place in privacy and are as confidential as possible.
- Take the employee seriously, taking time to listen to them, believing what they tell you and ensuring a non-judgmental approach.
- Understand that an employee may wish to involve a third party, such as a colleague,

trade union representative.

- Be aware that there may be additional issues facing the employee because of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, race or disability.
- Explore what support is available, explore options, and support the employee in whatever they then decide to do.
- Know what support options are available and discuss these with the employee e.g. specialist domestic abuse services (see [Appendix 2](#)), the trust's Employee Support and Counselling services. However, line managers must be mindful that employees might not want to involve other agencies due to their professional role in working with partner agencies.
- Respect the choices and decisions an employee makes about the relationship, even if you disagree with it. It is often difficult to leave for numerous reasons including, financial and childcare responsibilities or ongoing threats of abuse, and many attempts to leave may be made before they finally are able to leave their abusive partner.
- Keep the information confidential, telling only those who need to know (e.g. in relation to security, working hours, etc.), with the employee's permission. The only exception to this is if there are concerns relating to the protection of children or vulnerable adults or the victim is at high risk of further harm.

SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES AND ASSIST WITH THEIR SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Managers have a duty to maintain a secure environment for all employees. To do this it may be necessary to explore, with the employee concerned, the possibility of informing colleagues of potential risks (with consent) and referring to appropriate agencies.

Suggested interventions include:

- Complete a Risk Assessment with advice from HR when needed.
- Advise the employee about what support options are available and discuss these with the employee e.g., risk assessments with advice from HR, specialist domestic abuse services, local council support service as listed previously and counselling services via Lifeworks.
- Work with employees to adjust their schedule or workload as necessary and offer the option of having time off (e.g., flexi or leave) to resolve practicalities, for example attending solicitor meetings, making financial arrangements, or arranging alternative accommodation. In emergency situations consider whether such time could be granted as special paid leave.
- Ensure safe communication is maintained with the employee during any absence, whilst remembering to maintain confidentiality of their whereabouts.
- Encourage the employee to record all incidents of abuse or threatening behaviour in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, e-mails, or visits to an employee by the alleged perpetrator. The trust and our schools have a duty to maintain a safe place of

work, which necessitates the need to monitor and record all such incidents. You should also record witnesses to these. The records could be used if the employee wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator.

- The employee may wish to obtain a restraining order that includes the workplace. If obtained, a copy should be kept at hand at all times. The employee should consider providing a copy to the police and their Manager.
- The employee should consider providing a picture of the perpetrator to reception areas together with other relevant details, such as car registration numbers, that may help to maintain security in the workplace.
- Managers should consider increasing security measures such as having priority parking near the building or providing a security escort on entry and exit from the building.
- Make sure that the systems for recording employee whereabouts during the day are adequate and, if the work requires visits outside the office, consider how risks can be minimised (e.g. changing duties or allowing another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys).
- Review lone working arrangements. The employee may be at risk of sustaining an injury or further abuse from the perpetrator or other associate or family member.
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace.
- Consider restricting who can access the victim's calendar.
- The employee should identify an emergency contact person should the employer be unable to contact the victim.
- If an employee has any sickness absence as a result of domestic abuse, contact should be maintained with the employee. Sickness absence will be managed under the trust's Staff Absence and Attendance Policy.
- Review the security of personal information held by HR Administration staff such as temporary or new addresses.
- Limit information about employees disclosed by phone. Information that would help locate a victim or indicates a time of return should not be provided.
- Remind all employees, particularly immediate work colleagues, not to divulge information about other employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or work patterns.
- Where reasonably practicable, consider offering temporary or permanent changes in workplace.
- Consider work times and patterns, to minimise the risk to the employee at work, and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows. Consider relocating the employee's workspace to a more secure area or

another site.

- Offering changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in a reception area or, in exceptional circumstances, seeking another post, if alternative arrangements cannot be found. Consider making reference to the provisions of the Redeployment Policy.
- If the employee requests changing payment arrangements because their partner has access to their finances or is applying financial pressure on them then this should be considered.

Adjustments to Working Arrangements

An employee may need to take time off work to attend counselling sessions, legal appointments, make alternative living arrangements, short term childcare arrangements or supporting a traumatised child etc. the trust / school will make every effort to assist an employee if an employee needs to be absent from work due to problems that have arisen from domestic abuse.

It may be appropriate to allow paid time off in emergency or unexpected situations. Where appointments or time off are planned then the employee will be expected to follow the usual procedures for requesting leave. The length of the absence will be determined by the individual's situation and in consultation with the employee.

Reviewing Employee's Circumstances

Many of the workplace actions and safeguards may be temporary and line managers should discuss safety and review changes in circumstances with the employee at regular intervals.

Further Information

For further information and guidance managers should contact the HR team via hrhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk

APPENDIX 1

BACKGROUND

Domestic Abuse affects thousands of working women and men every day. National statistics state that there is a report of domestic abuse to the police every minute. It is known that much domestic abuse goes unreported and that these figures represent just a quarter of the estimated number of victims.

Unity Schools Partnership are committed to heightening awareness of domestic abuse and providing guidance and support for employees and management to reduce the occurrence of domestic abuse and its effects on the workplace.

The welfare of Unity Schools Partnership employees is of paramount importance and the organisation strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that violence and abuse against people is unacceptable and that such behaviour will not be condoned under any circumstances.

This organisation believes that every employee who is experiencing, or has experienced, domestic abuse has a right to raise the issue with their employer, in the knowledge that the organisation will treat the matter sympathetically, confidentially and effectively.

We do not accept that *"It's an issue for the home, not the workplace"*

In a survey by Women's Aid, 20% of respondents had left their jobs because of domestic abuse. In a TUC survey of domestic abuse in the workplace, 40% of those respondents who had experienced domestic abuse had to take time off work to deal with the effects of violence. 46% also said that domestic abuse affected their ability to do their job. The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence (CAADV) states that domestic abuse costs UK businesses £1.9 billion per year. Government research suggests that this figure is higher with domestic abuse costing businesses an estimated £2.7 billion per annum.

While the individual loses income, promotion and job prospects, the employer faces the costs of days taken off sick, lower productivity because of poor concentration and possible disruption by the violent partner at work, and the costs of recruitment and training if a person leaves their job due to domestic abuse.

By proactively addressing the issues, organisations can provide for the health and wellbeing of employees, reduce the costs to their business and help prevent the occurrence of domestic abuse.

APPENDIX 2

SPECIALIST DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

[Domestic abuse and sexual violence | Suffolk County Council](#)

[Advice for people affected by domestic abuse - Cambridge City Council](#)

[Report abuse or neglect: Domestic abuse - Essex County Council](#)

[Domestic violence | The London Borough Of Havering](#)

Other useful contact details:

- [Domestic abuse: how to get help - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Getting help for domestic violence and abuse - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Domestic Violence UK](#)
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247
[Domestic Abuse Help - National Centre for Domestic Violence \(ncdv.org.uk\)](#)
- Refuge 0870 5995 443
[Home | Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](#)
- Childline 0800 111
- Broken Rainbow (specialist agency for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans People)
0300 999 5428
- Forced Marriage Unit 020 7008
0151
- National Stalking Helpline 0808 802
0300
- The Hideout (aimed at children and young people)
<http://www.thehideout.org.uk>
- This is Abuse www.thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk
- [Cover your tracks online - Womens Aid](#)