

FamilyCare

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An abstract graphic consisting of several large, overlapping, rounded shapes in various colors: orange, pink, red, brown, green, olive, and blue. The shapes overlap in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some shapes appearing to be in front of others.

Domestic Abuse Policy

www.family-care.co.uk

Domestic Abuse Policy

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1. About this policy

1.1

This policy is informed by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse and outlines the responsibilities of employers and public authorities. We are committed to supporting staff affected by domestic abuse. We recognise that members of staff may experience domestic abuse and that this may have an adverse impact on their working lives.

1.2

The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) recognise domestic abuse as an issue;
- (b) raise awareness of domestic abuse and its impact on work, including how we can provide a safe place of work for those experiencing domestic abuse;
- (c) encourage open conversations between line managers and staff;
- (d) empower line managers to respond appropriately to any disclosures that are made to them and provide appropriate support; and
- (e) direct staff to relevant advice and assistance.

1.3

This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers.

1.4

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.



1.5

Any information you provide to us about your health or personal circumstances will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. We recognise that this data is sensitive personal data and will ensure it is handled lawfully, fairly, and in a strictly confidential manner, and only shared where necessary and appropriate.

1.6

This policy has also been developed with regard to the following legislation and guidance, where relevant: the Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, the Serious Crime Act 2015, and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

2. Who is responsible for this policy?

2.1

Our board of directors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Board has delegated day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular reviews of this policy, to the Head of Human Resources (HR). Managers can also request additional guidance or support from Human Resources (HR) if they feel unsure how to proceed.

2.2

Any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this policy, or about requesting training, should be referred to Human Resources (HR) in the first instance.

2.3

This policy is reviewed annually by Human Resources (HR).

2.4

Staff members are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting Human Resources (HR).

3. Confidentiality

3.1

Any information shared about domestic abuse will be treated as highly confidential and handled sensitively. Information will only be shared internally or externally on a strict "need-to-know" basis, where necessary to provide support, manage risk, comply with legal obligations, or protect the safety of the individual or others.

3.2

There may be occasions when it is appropriate for a line manager or others to share information provided to them about domestic abuse (whether internally, externally or both). For further details on when and how information might be shared, see paragraph 7.3 of this policy. Individuals should not hesitate to speak with their line manager if they have any concerns about how their information might be shared.

3.3

Records relating to domestic abuse disclosures or incidents will be kept securely and separately from standard personnel records, with access restricted to authorised individuals only. Records will be managed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and retention requirements.

4. What is domestic abuse?

4.1

In this policy, we use the term "domestic abuse" to refer to abuse which takes place between two individuals aged 16 years or over who are connected to each other. This could include individuals who are (or have previously been) in a relationship, have a child together, or are related.

4.2

We recognise that domestic abuse is complex and may involve a single incident or a pattern of behaviours. Examples include psychological, emotional, economic, physical or sexual abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, and violence or threats of violence.

4.3

Domestic abuse may include exploitation, manipulation, humiliation, harassment (including online harassment), isolation or intimidation and may result in criminal proceedings.

4.4

We recognise that anyone can be affected by domestic abuse irrespective of protected characteristics.



5. Domestic abuse is a workplace issue

5.1

We recognise that domestic abuse is a workplace issue for several reasons:

- (a) Abuse that an individual experiences at home is likely to have a direct impact on every aspect of their life, including their work life.
- (b) Staff members who work from home, whether for all or some of their working hours, may lack a safe space away from the perpetrator of the domestic abuse. In addition, domestic abuse may extend to the workplace itself, even when the workplace is not the victim's home, as the perpetrator may harass the victim at work (for example, by attending the workplace in person or by telephoning or sending messages to the workplace).
- (c) Economic abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of domestic abuse. It may include attempts to interfere with the victim's work by, among other things:
 - (d) sabotaging career prospects (for example, by attempting to undermine an individual's reputation at work);
 - (e) controlling working hours or ability to participate in work-related activities;
 - (f) making the victim late for work or insisting on driving them to and from work;
 - (g) destroying work clothes;
 - (h) isolating the victim from colleagues;
 - (i) demanding that earnings be paid into a specific bank account or diverting monies paid into a joint account;
 - (j) destroying the victim's confidence so that they feel unable to work; and
 - (k) causing injuries (whether physical or psychological) that result in sickness absence.

5.2

We acknowledge that domestic abuse may be experienced by any staff member, irrespective of their level of seniority or role within the organisation. Whatever the individual's role, we recognise that their ability to concentrate and perform at work is likely to be affected and that domestic abuse may be the underlying reason for any capability, absence or conduct issues. Where this is the case, we encourage individuals to let their line manager know so that adjustments to our usual procedures can be made where appropriate.

5.3

We want all our staff members to be able to remain in, and thrive at, work. Given that domestic abuse may involve attempts to stop an individual's source of independent income (for example, by causing the individual to leave employment) or otherwise sabotaging an individual's career, we are particularly keen to provide support to staff members who may be at risk in this way. We will seek to identify ways in which we can help these individuals to remain in work. If a perpetrator contacts our workplace and attempts to undermine a staff member's name,

position or reputation, we will speak with the staff member directly and discuss with them how we can protect their position. This may, for example, involve blocking calls from the perpetrator or denying them access to our buildings.



6. Encouraging open conversations

6.1

Domestic abuse can affect all sexes. All staff members should be aware of domestic abuse so that they can support those experiencing abuse or otherwise affected by abuse, whatever their sex, sexual orientation or other protected characteristic.

6.2

We encourage an environment in which colleagues can have open conversations about domestic abuse without fear of stigma or harassment. We will take any report of domestic abuse seriously and acknowledge that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator, not the victim.

6.3

While we do not expect staff members to become experts on domestic abuse, we do expect all staff members to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by domestic abuse at work. We also encourage staff members to be familiar with some of the signs of domestic abuse, while recognising that these signs may also be indicative of other issues. These signs may include but are not limited to:

- (a) persistent lateness or absenteeism (for example, because an individual is being prevented from leaving their house) or, conversely, spending an increased number of hours at work for no obvious reason;
- (b) reduced quantity or quality of work;
- (c) webcams being turned off during video calls;
- (d) changes in an employee's appearance (for example, wearing different clothes or more make-up to conceal injuries);
- (e) withdrawal from or lack of participation in work-related meetings and events;
- (f) isolation from family, friends and colleagues;
- (g) regular interruptions during the working day (for example, an individual receiving regular calls or messages which they find distressing and potentially needing to leave their desk to address the communications or to compose themselves if they are distressed);
- (h) lack of access to basic equipment or the internet when working from home (or monitoring of access);
- (i) interception of text and other messages, letters and emails;
- (j) control of finances (for example, wages being paid into a new bank account or an individual not being given enough money to buy food or pay bills); and
- (k) an individual assuming sole responsibility for childcare arrangements.

7. Who to speak with if you are experiencing domestic abuse

7.1

Anyone affected should feel confident speaking with their line manager or Human Resources (HR).

7.2

Line managers are expected to respond sensitively and in accordance with this policy.

7.3

While confidentiality will be respected, there may be circumstances where it is necessary to share information without consent, including where there is a risk of harm, safeguarding concerns, or a legal obligation. Any disclosure will be made on a strictly "need-to-know" basis.



7.4

We will keep records of incidents and disclosures in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and confidentiality requirements.

7.5

Line managers are expected to:

- (a) listen in a supportive and non-judgemental manner;
- (b) avoid investigating or attempting to resolve the abuse themselves;
- (c) assess whether there is an immediate risk to safety;
- (d) consider appropriate workplace adjustments; and
- (e) seek guidance from Human Resources (HR) where necessary.

8. Support and adjustments

8.1

We recognise that support can include:

- (a) Up to three days' paid leave per rolling 12-month period may be granted at management discretion to enable employees to attend appointments, arrange accommodation, seek legal advice or take other steps necessary to ensure their safety
- (b) Flexible working adjustments;
- (c) Safe communication methods;
- (d) Code words or signals;
- (e) Quiet space for confidential calls;
- (f) Blocking contact;
- (g) Removal of public details;
- (h) Security arrangements;
- (i) Redeployment;
- (j) Office access;
- (k) Payment changes;
- (l) Mail redirection;
- (m) Adjustments to procedures;
- (n) Referral to Occupational Health where appropriate;
- (o) Access to Employee Assistance Programmes or wellbeing support where available.

8.2

Where monitoring contact is required, this will be done sensitively and in line with agreed safe communication methods.

8.3

Where appropriate, we will agree safe methods of communication and contact arrangements with the individual.

9. Risk assessments

9.1

We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff. Where domestic abuse is disclosed or suspected, we will consider whether a workplace risk assessment is appropriate, including risks to the individual, colleagues and others, and implement proportionate measures to reduce those risks.

10. Disciplinary action against perpetrators

10.1

We will not tolerate domestic abuse in any form. Any employee who is alleged to have committed abuse in the workplace, during working hours or using our equipment will be subject to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy. Where an employee's conduct is the subject of a criminal investigation, we will not usually await the outcome of any prosecution before deciding what action, if any, to take.



10.2

Conduct outside of work may also be treated as a disciplinary matter if we consider that it is relevant to the individual's employment with us, regardless of whether that conduct is subject to criminal investigation or not.

10.3

Where there is a risk that a staff member's behaviour may impact the safety or wellbeing of others, we may take immediate and proportionate action, including restricting access to premises, IT systems or colleagues, pending investigation.

10.4

Where a staff member discloses their abusive behaviour to us, we will engage with that individual to identify sources of external help and support. We encourage all staff members to address their abusive behaviours of any kind and recognise that change may only be possible with the provision of external help.

10.5

In the event that a false allegation of domestic abuse is made by an employee either maliciously or deliberately, we will consider what disciplinary action, if any, is appropriate.

11. Other places you can go for help

11.1

While we are committed to supporting victims of domestic abuse at work, we are not experts on domestic abuse and recognise that not all staff members may feel comfortable speaking with their line manager or a colleague about domestic abuse. The following offer a range of help and support:

- The Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge (0808 2000 247).
- The Bright Sky App, a mobile app and website operated in conjunction with Hestia for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.
- The ManKind Initiative Domestic Support Service (MIDASS) (01823 334244), which provides support to men experiencing domestic abuse.
- Galop (0800 9995428), which provides support to LGBT+ people who have experienced a hate crime, domestic abuse or sexual violence.
- Muslim Women's Network (0800 999 5786), which provides a confidential listening service for Muslim girls or women.
- Jewish Women's Aid (0808 801 0500), which provides support to Jewish women and children affected by domestic and sexual violence.
- Southall Black Sisters, which provides an instant messaging service and support to Black (primarily Asian, African and African-Caribbean) women.
- Respect, which provides help for perpetrators.

11.2

We recognise that external specialist services are best placed to provide expert support and encourage their use wherever appropriate.

11.3

Support can be found with:

- National domestic Abuse Helpline : 0808 2000 24 / nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- Women's Aid : womensaid.org.uk
- Mankind : 0808 800 1170 (free phone) / 01823 334 244
- Galop : 0800 999 5428 / help@galop.org.uk

12. Contacting the police

12.1

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and are in danger, but you are unable to speak on the telephone, call 999, listen to the questions from the operator and, if you can, respond by coughing or tapping on the handset. More guidance is available at: <https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/>.

12.2

If you are calling from a mobile telephone, press 55 after calling 999 and this will transfer your call to the police. If you are calling from a landline and the operator can only hear background noise, you may be connected to a police call handler. If you replace the handset, the landline may remain connected for 45 seconds in case you pick up again. Calling 999 from a landline should automatically allow information about your location to be available to the call handler. This will not happen if you are calling from a mobile telephone.

12.3

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, text REGISTER to 999 to register with the emergency SMS service.

12.4

Staff should always prioritise their immediate safety and use emergency services where there is an imminent risk of harm.

