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Domestic Abuse Policy

Reviewed: July 2025

Date of Next Review: July 2026



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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 will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that this data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

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. Managers can also request additional guidance or support from 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 in the first instance.

2.3 This policy is reviewed annually by Human Resources.

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

3. Confidentiality

3.1 Any information shared with a line manager about domestic abuse will be treated as highly confidential and will not be shared internally, including to Human Resources, except where necessary and on a "need-to-know" basis. In addition, information about domestic abuse will not form part of an individual's personnel record. This means, for example, that the information will not be used as part of annual performance reviews or when giving references.

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.



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, for example, include individuals who are (or have previously been) in a relationship together, or who have a child together. It could also include individuals who are related to each other. We use the term "victim" to refer to the individual who has been, or is being, subjected to domestic abuse. However, we acknowledge that an individual may not identify as a victim and prefer to be described differently. We use the term "perpetrator" to describe the individual who has committed, or is committing, domestic abuse.

4.2 We recognise that domestic abuse is complex. It can take many forms and may involve a single incident or a pattern of behaviours. Examples of domestic abuse include but are not limited to:

- (a) psychological, emotional or economic abuse;
- (b) physical or sexual abuse;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; and
- (d) violence or threats of violence.

Domestic abuse can involve, among other things, exploitation, subordination, manipulation, humiliation, harassment (including online harassment), isolation or intimidation. It is extremely serious and may result in criminal proceedings.

4.3 The signs of domestic abuse are not always visible or obvious, and individuals experiencing abuse may attempt to hide the effects of that abuse. They may also provide an alternative explanation for any signs of abuse that are apparent to colleagues or be reluctant to engage in conversation. Some victims may not identify their experiences as those of domestic abuse at all.

4.4 We recognise that anyone can be affected by domestic abuse irrespective of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, age or any other protected characteristic. However, women are more likely to experience domestic abuse and be killed as a result of that abuse. In addition, some individuals may be vulnerable to domestic abuse because, for example, they are also disabled or have recently come out as transgender.

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:
 - (i) sabotaging career prospects (for example, by attempting to undermine an individual's reputation at work);
 - (ii) controlling working hours or ability to participate in work-related activities;
 - (iii) making the victim late for work or insisting on driving them to and from work;
 - (iv) destroying work clothes;
 - (v) isolating the victim from colleagues;



- (vi) demanding that earnings be paid into a specific bank account or diverting monies paid into a joint account;
- (vii) destroying the victim's confidence so that they feel unable to work; and
- (viii) 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 by domestic abuse should feel confident to speak with their line manager or a member of Human Resources about the support they may need in relation to work. Any information shared by a victim of domestic abuse will not form part of their personnel record.

7.2 We expect line managers to be ready to have conversations with staff members about domestic abuse and what support is available. The role of the line manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to provide support related to work and to direct an individual to external help. Any conversation must be treated sensitively and handled confidentially in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. For more information on the confidential treatment of reports of domestic abuse, see paragraph 3 of this policy.

7.3 While line managers or colleagues approached by a staff member in relation to domestic abuse should attempt to agree next steps with the individual and maintain confidentiality, there may be occasions where it is appropriate for the matter to be escalated internally (for example, to a senior manager) or to an external agency where there are concerns about the safety of the individual or others connected to them, such as family members or work colleagues. Where possible, we will seek to obtain the consent of the individual before making any external disclosures, and any disclosures will be made on a strictly "need-to-know" basis. However, we will contact the police where we believe there to be an imminent threat to life or risk of harm.

7.4 We will keep records of any incidents at work related to domestic abuse (for example, persistent telephone calls or visits) and note any actions taken. We will also keep a record of any reports of domestic abuse. These records will be handled confidentially in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and will not form part of a victim's personnel record.

8. Support and adjustments

8.1 We recognise that there is support we can offer to help victims of domestic abuse at work. While victims' needs will vary, we are committed to offering the following where possible and appropriate in the circumstances:

- (a) Paid time off work, up to a maximum of 3 days each calendar year, to deal with issues such as moving to a safe house, refuge or new home, settling children into a new school or attending appointments with support providers.
- (b) Temporary adjustments to work patterns, hours or duties, as well as temporary flexible working arrangements outside those offered under our Flexible Working Policy.
- (c) Safe methods of communication (for example, providing a new work email address or telephone number).
- (d) An agreed code word or hand signal, so an individual can discreetly alert colleagues that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- (e) A quiet room to make and receive confidential telephone calls during working hours.
- (f) Diversion of telephone calls and emails from a list agreed with any victim of domestic abuse.
- (g) Removal of work contact details and photographs from our company website and other public platforms operated by us.
- (h) An agreed procedure with reception and other key contacts to ensure that details of a victim's whereabouts during working hours are not disclosed or made accessible.
- (i) Temporary redeployment to another role or work location.
- (j) Access to office space when an individual would otherwise be working from home.
- (k) Payment of wages into a different bank account.
- (l) Redirection of work-related mail, such as in relation to pension arrangements and private medical insurance.

(m) Adjustments to disciplinary, capability and absence procedures where domestic abuse is a factor in any performance, conduct or absence issues.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and we encourage staff members to let their line managers know what other arrangements or adjustments may be helpful given their circumstances. Decisions about what support can be offered will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs of the victim and business requirements.



8.2 We encourage victims of domestic abuse to let us have emergency contact details for a trusted friend or family member and to let us know if personal information (for example, in relation to work-related benefits provided by us) should be updated. An individual's line manager should be contacted to provide this information in the first instance.

8.3 If an individual has left a domestic abuse situation and is trying to ensure that the perpetrator of the abuse cannot find them, we encourage the individual to speak with their line manager about what steps can be taken by us to reduce this risk. This may, for example, involve the removal of work contact details, names and photographs from our company website and other public platforms operated by us, as well as some of the other steps outlined above.

8.4 Where the victim and perpetrator both work for us, we will discuss appropriate steps with the victim and consider whether a temporary change of role or relocation to a different workplace may be appropriate. We will also consider what, if any, investigation may be needed. During any investigation, the perpetrator will have an opportunity to respond to the allegations against them if they also work for us. Where possible, and if it is deemed appropriate following discussion with the victim, we will seek to ensure that it is the perpetrator's, not the victim's, work arrangements that are changed. We will also review access to our buildings, both to staff members and visitors.

8.5 Where an individual normally works from home for all or part of the working week, and we have concerns that the individual may be experiencing domestic abuse, we will seek to ensure that the individual is part of at least one telephone or video call with a colleague on each working day. If contact is lost, we will consider what steps may be appropriate in the circumstances.

8.6 We will always seek to agree with the staff member who is experiencing domestic abuse what will be communicated to colleagues, if any changes are obvious and may require explanation.

9. Risk assessments

9.1 We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may negatively impact on those experiencing domestic abuse. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those experiencing domestic abuse, as well as identifying the risks of domestic abuse where an individual works from home.

10. Disciplinary action against perpetrators of domestic abuse

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 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.

10.4 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 encourage all line managers to direct staff members who make disclosures of domestic abuse to these sources of external help, as appropriate.

12. Contacting the police when you cannot speak or are deaf or hard of hearing

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/pt/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.