

Domestic abuse policy

Policy overview

We have a zero-tolerance approach to violence or abuse towards our employees, including domestic abuse. We ensure the provision of non-judgemental support for those who suffer it. We commit to supporting:

- employee health
- wellbeing
- safety at work

We recognise that any employee may be affected by domestic abuse as:

- a survivor of domestic abuse
- an individual living with domestic abuse
- impacted upon by domestic abuse
- a perpetrator of domestic abuse

Our policy covers how we will support:

- individuals experiencing or impacted by domestic abuse
- where there are concerns that an employee is abusing others
- employees seeking help if affected by domestic abuse

We recognise that domestic abuse is an equalities issue. We will not discriminate against anyone subjected to domestic abuse in terms of employment or future development.

Principles

We strongly encourage individuals suffering abuse to disclose this for the safety of themselves and others in the workplace. We will not force them to share this information if they do not want to or are unable to.

We ensure for employees who disclose any experience of abuse that the information they provide is confidential. We will not ordinarily share this with other members of staff without their permission. Exceptions to this may occur when:

- there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults
- we need to act to protect the safety of any employee

We will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse-related offence on a case-by-case basis. We aim to reduce risk and support change.

We view the use of violence and abusive behaviour by employees, wherever this occurs, as a breach of [our code of conduct](#). We may consider the matter under [our disciplinary policy](#). This includes if an individual becomes the subject of a police investigation, or receives a caution or conviction.

We commit to ensuring that:

- we treat allegations fairly and in a way that supports the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- employees will receive guidance and support
- we will maintain confidentiality and restrict information to only those who need to know
- we will conduct any investigation thoroughly and promptly

Definitions of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern 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.

It can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse of another person:

Psychological or emotional

- intimidation
- insults
- isolating them from friends and family
- criticism
- denying abuse
- treating them as inferior
- threatening to harm children or take them away
- forced marriage
- swearing
- undermining confidence
- making racist remarks
- making them feel unattractive
- calling them stupid or useless
- eroding their independence
- threatening suicide if they leave 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 them work
- undermining their efforts to find work or study
- refusing to give them money, asking for an explanation of how they spend every penny
- making them beg for money
- gambling
- not paying bills

Controlling behaviour

- acts designed to make them subordinate 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

Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse used to harm, punish, or frighten victims. This is not a legal definition.

It includes 'honour-based' violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Abused individuals are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Stalking or harassment

Stalking is "a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress."

Harassment is "criminal conduct which causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence; offences under sections 2 and 4 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997"

A stalker is obsessed or fixated with the victim. A stalker's behaviour often means that a victim has to change their day-to-day routine to try and avoid the behaviour.

Stalking does not just take place within an intimate relationship. Stalking can occur in other settings, such as the workplace.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 created two new offences of stalking by inserting new sections 2A and 4A into the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. The new offences came into force on 25 November 2012. For more information, [read the Home Office guidance](#).

There is no strict legal definition of 'stalking'. However, section 2A (3) of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 gives examples of acts or omissions which are often associated with stalking, such as:

- following a person
- watching or spying on someone
- forcing contact with the victim through any means, including social media

The effect of such behaviour is to curtail a victim's freedom. It may leave them feeling that they constantly have to be careful.

In many cases, the conduct might appear innocent, taken in isolation. However, when carried out repeatedly as a course of conduct, it may cause significant alarm, harassment or distress to the victim.

There are various agencies which can support stalking victims.

- [The Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)
- [The Alice Ruggles Trust](#)
- [The Hollie Gazzard Trust](#)
- [Paladin](#)

- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300
- Crime Stoppers: 0800 555 111

For more information, visit www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com

There are also a variety of apps to download which can help to safeguard a person, such as:

- [Bright Sky](#) - allows users to journal incidents safely, get information on other services available for support
- [Hollie Guard](#) - can track you, tell friends and family you are in danger and record incidents safely

Individuals must remember that they are not alone and are not to blame. Employees suffering abuse can refer to any of the support services detailed in this policy and on our website. Our employee support and counselling service is also available.

We encourage employees to speak to their manager for support if domestic abuse:

- affects their health and wellbeing
- hinders their ability to do their job
- puts them at risk while carrying out their work duties

Identification of domestic abuse

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may not feel able to tell people at work of their situation or approach their manager. However, other issues may alert a manager to the possibility of domestic abuse, such as:

- frequent absence from work
- poor performance
- an employee's partner frequently contacting them at work

Managers should take this into account in considering how to deal with the situation. If they identify an underlying cause, offering support may mean that the employee can deal with their situation.

To aid managers we advise that they [complete our awareness of domestic violence and abuse e-learning](#).

Recognising when an employee may need help

Everyone reacts to domestic abuse in different ways. We should ensure we do not rush to form a judgement or conclusion. There are warning signs that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, such as:

- coming to work repeatedly with injuries and the reason for them does not line up with the injury
- using heavy make-up to cover injuries
- an unusual number of calls from home and strong reactions to the calls

- being late for work and needing to leave early
- not wanting to go home
- relying on their partner to bring them to work and take them home
- being secretive about home life
- being unable to mix with colleagues outside of office hours or for social events
- frequent absenteeism
- a drop in the level of their performance or productivity
- emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous, confused
- their partner, ex-partner or other family member exerts an unusual amount of control over their life
- being extremely passive or aggressive
- seeming chronically depressed or depressed in cycles
- isolating themselves at work

The most important sign is that they may begin to behave in an unusual way for them.

Adjustments to working arrangements

An employee suffering from domestic abuse may need to take time off work to attend:

- counselling sessions
- legal appointments
- domestic abuse support appointments
- make alternative living arrangements

Managers will make every effort to assist an employee if they need to be absent from work.

They may allow paid time off under the special leave provisions of [our leave and time off policy](#).

Where an appointment or time off is planned, the employee may use annual leave or flexi-time. The individual's situation will determine the length of the absence.

Reviewing employee's circumstances

Many workplace actions and safeguards are temporary.

Managers should discuss safety and review changes in circumstances with the employee at regular intervals.

Confidentiality and right to privacy

We may decide to breach confidentiality. We will only do this after careful consideration and taking specialist advice.

In these circumstances, a manager will discuss this with the employee to explain why we are doing so. We will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

We keep all records concerning domestic abuse strictly confidential. We will only share this information on a need-to-know basis. We will take any breach of confidentiality by an employee seriously and may take disciplinary action.

With domestic abuse in a same-sex relationship, we must take care to avoid the double disclosure of confidential information. We may not know about an individual's sexual preferences.

Support for individuals and managers

We recognise that developing a life free from abuse is a process, not an event. We will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.

We require all employees to do basic training about domestic abuse. Managers will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse is reported, managers will treat unplanned absences and poor timekeeping sympathetically. We will support managers to help employees involved in sensitive issues, including domestic abuse.

Managers must maintain a secure environment for all employees. They may need to inform colleagues about potential risks and refer to appropriate agencies, with consent. They will explore these options with the employee.

Managers should [complete a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Abuse \(DASH\) risk assessment](#) with the employee.

It will help them to determine the most appropriate course of action and response. Managers should become familiar with this risk assessment and referral pathways. We will use it to allocate resources and intervention.

For more details, view the:

- [DASH flowchart](#)
- [MARAC process map](#)

Managers must contact the police if they believe the victim:

- is at imminent high risk of significant harm or death
- and, a crime has been committed

They must call 999 and make an emergency referral to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

If managers believe the victim is not at imminent high risk of significant harm or death, they should:

- encourage the victim to report the abuse to the police
- tell the victim they are making a referral to MARAC
- provide details of specialist domestic abuse services

If managers believe a crime has been committed, but there is no immediate danger, they should:

- call 101
- tell the victim that they are making a referral to MARAC and that an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) will contact them

If managers believe that any children linked to the abused or the abuser are affected, they must call children's services on 01522 782111.

Managers can also provide the following support:

- special paid leave for relevant appointments (for example, with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments)
- temporarily looking at taking their name or picture off public or internal systems
- using other existing policies, including working flexibly
- access to the employee support and counselling services in work time

This list, as well as safety planning, is not exhaustive.

For guidance around safety planning, [read the multi-agency domestic abuse joint protocol](#).

Managers must respect the rights of employees to make their own decisions at every stage while supporting them. Employees are not always aware of what support and advice we can offer. They rely on us to inform them of all their choices before they can make an informed decision. We then have to respect that decision and signpost accordingly.

Supporting employees when working at home

We will provide support information and communications to staff confirming our concern for the welfare of all employees. If they disclose abuse, we will help them access support if it is safe to do so.

Many staff members experiencing domestic abuse will have used their work environment as a safe space to access specialist support. Where employees are working from home, they will need an alternative. For example, they may need information about:

- available online support
- technical security tips, such as how to hide browser history

For more information, [read the SafeLives COVID-19 advice](#).

Managers should have sufficient structured contact with all their team members, including any absent due to sickness. Contact with an employer may be an opportunity for someone who is still living with their abuser to have a 'legitimate' link to the outside world.

Managers may be in the best possible position to check in with someone who is isolated and may be at risk.

Advice for managers

We encourage managers to think creatively about what they can do with the resources they have to support staff while working from home.

- As employees may not see their colleagues every day, managers must stay in contact. They should have regular one-to-ones and support and supervision sessions with their staff
- Help support employee wellbeing by sensitively asking how they feel about the changes to their working environment. Ask whether there is any support which can be put in place to make this easier for them
- Ask staff to think about their existing support systems, such as friends, family or neighbours and how they can strengthen these. To them develop their bespoke support plan, [read safety planning guidance on the SafeLives website](#).
- Victims and survivors may want to discuss and review any existing support plans in place. They may need further help. It is essential to communicate with HR, safeguarding leads and the senior leadership team to discuss individual cases.
- Domestic abuse signs that may have been spotted by work colleagues will not be as noticeable when working from home. Aim to have sufficient time during video calls to check in with people. It will also help employees to stay connected to their workplace and their peer group, reducing isolation
- There can be visible injuries or other signs of someone using physical violence and intimidation, such as broken objects or damage to the home. However, domestic abuse is so much more than physical abuse. Other things to look out for might include:
 - changes in behaviour, acting in an unusual way or out of character for them
 - withdrawing from previous sources of support (for example, team chat threads or catch-ups)
 - wariness or anxiety about their partner or a family member coming into the room while you are speaking with them
 - reluctance to talk about their home situation or avoiding answering questions about it
 - signs of tension, audible conflict in the home, shouting at children or others

None of these things specifically indicate that a staff member is experiencing domestic abuse. However, they may suggest that they are struggling with something and may require help with that issue. It is essential that you explore it with them and identify appropriate support.

Safety planning

We will:

- prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known they are experiencing domestic abuse. When employees disclose domestic abuse, we will encourage contact with EDAN Lincs and make any other appropriate referrals where necessary
- work with the employee and EDAN Lincs or any other agency, with the employee's consent, to identify what actions we can take. We want to increase personal safety at work and home as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues
- look at measures to ensure a safe working environment (for example, changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls or temporarily taking their name or picture off public or internal systems)
- temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- temporary or permanent changes to where they park (for example, well lit and near to a main door)
- change specific duties (for example, to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer-facing role)
- redeploy or relocate them (for example, if they are a front-of-house employee on a main reception)
- locate office space for them to work in if working from home is no longer a safe option. Telling other householders that we have asked the employee to return to an office environment, not because of any other situation, will limit the risk increasing. This applies to both employees who are being abused and those who choose to abuse.

Working from home increases the proximity of those in an abusive relationship. If we can offer office space to an employee, it will alleviate some of the household's pressure. It can reduce the risk and hopefully allow us to provide employee support.

If both the abused and abuser work for us

Where both the abused person and alleged abuser both work for us, we will consider appropriate action. We may include taking steps to protect the victim and alleged perpetrator from:

- working together
- coming into contact in the workplace
- having access to information about each other in the workplace

We encourage all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their manager about their concerns in confidence.

Those who abuse

We do not condone domestic abuse perpetrated by employees under any circumstances. We will not treat it as a purely private matter. We recognise that we have a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address abusive behaviour.

If an employee approaches management about their abusive behaviour, we will provide information about services available to them.

Employees need to be aware of the potential consequences if found to be perpetrators of domestic abuse and:

- have a responsibility for giving advice

- come into contact with or support vulnerable people or children

Employees found to be assisting abusers in perpetrating abuse (for example, giving access to facilities) may be subject to disciplinary action. If we find that an employee has made malicious allegations about colleagues perpetrating abuse, we will treat it as a disciplinary offence.

Notification

Managers must report certain offences to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). HR will advise managers whether we must make a referral. It is usually the case where there is an offence against a child or vulnerable adult.

The DBS has the power to bar individuals from working with specific groups. Any such restrictions could have an impact on an employee's continued employment with us.

If the role of an employee identified as a perpetrator is part of the MARAC process, we will notify the community safety strategy co-ordinator – DA lead immediately. If they have access to the Modus system, we will withdraw access pending investigation.

We have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who may be involved in managing and overseeing individual cases. The LADO may provide advice and guidance to us liaising with the police and other agencies. They will monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with quickly and follow a thorough and fair process.

Managers must direct all referrals relating to vulnerable adults to the safeguarding vulnerable adults team.

Get support

You can find support organisations locally and nationally:

Specialist support services in Lincolnshire

EDAN Lincs

Visit: www.edanlincs.org.uk

Email: info@edanlincs.org.uk

Call: 01522 510041

SARC [Sexual Assault Referral Centre for Lincolnshire]

Visit: www.lpft.nhs.uk/spring-lodge/home

Email: info@springlodge.org

Call: 01522 524402 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Call: 01371 812686 (at any other time)

Support for those who abuse in Lincolnshire

Make a Change

Visit: www.makeachange.uk.net

Email: referral@makeeachangelincs.org.uk

Call: 01522 246616

Domestic Abuse Lincolnshire

Visit: www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com

National Support Services

Hestia

www.hestia.org/brightsky

Forced Marriage Unit

Visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage

Call: 020 7008 0151

Galop [LGBT+]

Visit: www.galop.org.uk

Call: 0300 999 5428

Karma Nirvana

Visit: www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Mankind Initiative

Visit: www.new.mankind.org.uk

Call: 01823 334244

Men's Advice Line

Visit: www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Call: 0808 801 0327

National Stalking Helpline

Call: 080 8802 300

Paladin

Visit: www.paladinservice.co.uk

Call: 020 3866 4107

Rape Crisis

Visit: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Refuge - Accommodation for Male Victims

Visit: www.mensaid.co.uk

Call: 01753 549865

Respect – for those who want to address their abusive behaviour

Visit: www.respect.uk.net

Samaritans

Visit: www.samaritans.org

Call: 116123

Shelter

Visit: www.shelter.org.uk

Call: 0808 800 4444

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Visit: www.suzylamplugh.org

For more information about Domestic Abuse and MARAC, read:

- [The Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Joint Protocol](#)
- [The MARAC Operating Protocol \[MOP\]](#)



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