

Domestic Abuse Awareness Guidance for employees and managers

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1. Introduction

West Suffolk Council is committed to supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse.

The aim of this guide is to provide information about how the council will tackle issues of domestic violence and abuse and support those affected.

The council is committed to ensuring a safe working environment and safeguarding the health and wellbeing of employees. The council has zero tolerance for violence and abuse and recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. Cases of domestic violence and abuse experienced by employees will be treated seriously and sensitively.

This guidance sets out the rights of employees and explains the support available to them and will help:

- managers to be confident about their role in managing and supporting employees
- employees to understand what support and help is available to them
- foster an inclusive working environment in which everyone is treated fairly.

2. Definition of domestic abuse

The Government's new definition of domestic violence and abuse now states:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 years or over, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or

sexuality. This can encompass, however, 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 resource 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 of pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim'.

Domestic violence and abuse happens in all groups and sections of society. While domestic violence and abuse most commonly refers to that perpetrated against a partner, it also includes abuse against ex-partners, and violence by a son, daughter, parent or parent-in-law or any other person who has a close or family relationship with the victim. Domestic violence and abuse may also be perpetrated by a carer.

Domestic violence and abuse are most commonly thought of as male against female abuse. However, females can be perpetrators of abuse against male victims or survivors, and same sex abuse also occurs (that is, male against male, female against female).

Domestic violence and abuse could involve:

- the misuse of physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and/or financial control
- a range of behaviours, which may be actual or threatened
- forced marriage, 'honour' based violence and female genital mutilation
- use of children to control an adult victim/survivor (because of this, child abuse and adult abuse can overlap).

3. What can managers do to support their employees?

Domestic violence and abuse is often viewed as a private matter and managers may be reluctant to address the issue when they become aware of it. It is important that managers do recognise and address issues of domestic violence and abuse.

It is also important that employees feel confident in talking to their managers about domestic abuse and violence. Survivors and victims may feel very isolated

and alone, as well as feel in some way that they are to blame. The council's working environment may feel like the only safe place for them to talk about abuse and violence. The council will do everything practicably possible to support employees, so they do not feel isolated and to accept that they are not to blame for what has happened, or is happening, to them and aid employees to get the help that they need and to help improve their safety.

The council will provide a secure and safe working environment for its employees as required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Where appropriate, reasonable additional measures will be taken by the council to protect the safety of those experiencing domestic violence and abuse while travelling between home and work, while at work or when carrying out council duties.

The council will support victims and survivors by signposting them to appropriate agencies. It will also be able to help the employee in accessing the range of support they need and putting in place measures to safeguard them.

Here are some of the ways in which the manager can support an employee if they believe an employee is a victim, survivor or perpetrator or is supporting a victim or survivor:

- seek guidance and support from your HR business partner
- take particular care, for example, in contacting the employee, as their private and/or work phones, emails or social media may be monitored
- provide time for the employee to make contact with support services during their working day
- provide access to a different laptop or phone
- seek support from a domestic abuse champion – contact details are on the intranet [Domestic abuse champions](#) page.

Seek advice about counselling services from your HR Business Partner.

4. Support available for employees

There is a variety of initiatives available to support employees experiencing domestic abuse or violence and to raise awareness to support managers and staff.

Support available to staff experiencing domestic abuse or violence:

- a trained domestic abuse champion (confidential) – contact details are on the intranet [Domestic abuse champions](#) page
- your HR Business Partner (confidential)

- your manager (confidential)
- a safe place during the working day to contact support services
- access to a different device, laptop or phone
- counselling services arranged by your HR Business Partner.

Professional support and resources:

- Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid and Outreach Centre: [Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid Centre](#)
- Suffolk Domestic Abuse 24 hours a day, seven days a week helpline: [Suffolk Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)
- Anglia Care Trust Outreach Service: [Anglia Care Trust - Community safety](#)
- [Alumah](#)
- Men's advice line: [Respect – Men's advice line](#)
- National domestic violence: [Refuge – National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)

Support available for managers and staff:

- domestic abuse awareness training – see corporate offer on MiHR or speak with your HR Business Partner

If, after the domestic abuse awareness training, you would be interested in becoming a domestic abuse champion, please get in touch with the Learning and Development Team or speak with your HR Business Partner.

5. Domestic abuse champions

We have been working to set up a network of domestic abuse champions who have been trained to equip them with the skills to spread awareness among colleagues and act as a 'go to' person for information and support.

The champions' aims are to:

- offer a consistent response to domestic abuse across Suffolk and offer support which is rooted in the community
- be confident in encouraging disclosures of abuse and to respond in a professional manner, giving people the tools to stay safe and get the right support promptly.

A list of our champions is available on the intranet, with more information about them and what inspired them to become a champion.

If you, or someone you know, are interested in becoming a domestic abuse champion, please email wellbeing@westsuffolk.gov.uk for more information.

This training is free and available to anyone. If you have a family member or friend who might be interested, they can book a place on the champion training through [Suffolk InfoLink Community Directory – Suffolk Domestic Abuse Champions Network](#)

If you would like more information, you can also email dachampions@suffolk.gov.uk

6. Enquiries and change control

Please direct all enquiries relating to this document to the HR team.

This guidance will be subject to regular and relevant review every three years.

Please forward any suggestions for changes to this document to the HR team.

7. Revisions

Date of review or revision	Reason	Author
February 2023	New guidance	Kay Vincent



Appendix A: Support services

If you are being abused, are concerned about family, friends or neighbours, or are worried you may commit domestic abuse, please seek help. There are lots of resources and services available to you.

Service	Description	Contact details
National Domestic Violence Helpline (24-hour)	A service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.	Freephone: 0808 2000 247 Website: Refuge – National Domestic Abuse Helpline
Alumah	Provides a range of services to help those who have experienced domestic abuse. These services can be broken into the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual counselling • support groups • signposting • a community atmosphere for support and friendships. 	Website: Alumah
Restitute	Supports the people who care for survivors of sexual or violent crime. Third party victims of crime, because they are forgotten victims. They are parents, carers, children, close friends and partners who step in to care when the worst happens, often for decades.	Website: Restitute – Supporting third party victims of crime

Leeway Support	Provides support to adults, young people and children who are experiencing domestic abuse in Norfolk and Suffolk.	Telephone: 0300 561 0077 Website: Leeway Domestic Violence and Abuse Services
Domestic Abuse Outreach Service (Anglia Care Trust)	Freephone support and guidance line.	Telephone: 0800 977 5690
ManKind Initiative	Advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse.	Weekdays 10am to 4pm Telephone: 01823 334244 Website: ManKind Initiative – Help for male victims
Bright Sky app	Free to download mobile app providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.	Download on the App Store 
National Stalking Helpline	Information and guidance to anyone affected by harassment or stalking.	Open 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday (except Wednesday – open 1 to 4pm) Telephone: 0808 802 0300 Email: advice@stalkinghelpline.org Website: Suzy Lamplugh Trust – National Stalking Helpline
Suffolk Rape Crisis	Provides support to women and girls aged 14 and above who have experienced any form of sexual violence, at any point in their lives. Referrals, telephone support and online counselling.	Telephone: 0800 085 0520
Bury St Edmunds Women’s Aid Centre	Provides temporary accommodation for women and children fleeing Domestic abuse. Telephone support and one-to-one support.	Telephone: 01284 753 085 Website: Bury St Edmunds Women’s Aid Centre

Survivors in transition	Supports men and women who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood.	Telephone: 01473 232 499 Website: Survivors in transition
Respect Phoneline	Support if you are worried about hurting someone.	Telephone: 0808 8024040 Website: Respect Phoneline
Lighthouse	A charitable organisation based in Suffolk, providing emotional support to women, young people and children experiencing domestic abuse in their personal or family relationships.	Telephone: 01473 228 270 Website: Lighthouse



Appendix B: Domestic abuse guidance for managers

COVID-19 saw people's day-to-day lives drastically altered and, since that time, agile working and working from home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feeling at risk of domestic abuse.

Employers can play an important role in the prevention of domestic abuse and ensure that the right access and support is signposted for those affected by it. As employers and line managers, we are committed to ensure that all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse.

The following information can raise awareness within our teams on how we can support those affected.

Defining domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, or violence or abuse between people aged 16 and over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can take different forms, including but not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- economic
- emotional
- verbal.

Recognise

It is not always easy to identify domestic abuse as there can be various signs, many of which rely on regular contact with each other to spot. With increased working from home, this becomes more difficult. However, there are still ways to adapt and support our colleagues.

Managers will need to remain in regular contact with their team members, adapting conversations to include wellbeing. One-to-one meetings need to take place more often than before, ideally over video platforms. Be aware of people's behaviours and home set up and take notice if an employee always wants to turn their video off

during a call. Look out for increased anxiety or tiredness and follow up with your colleague if they haven't replied to an email or message for a while. Note down any changes in performance and document why these might be occurring.

The following signs can indicate some form of domestic abuse. However, they can also be signs of other issues and many could be attributed to recent changes in our home and working lives. Such behaviours may result in disciplinary actions if the reasons behind them are not understood. As a manager, it is important to look out for these signs and understand the cause of them:

- change in working patterns – for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave early
- reduced quality and quantity of work, such as missing deadlines or a drop in usual performance standards
- changes in character or behaviour – for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted or depressed
- being isolated from colleagues
- secretive regarding home life
- visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations
- change in the pattern or amount of makeup used
- substance use or misuse
- fatigue or sleep disorders
- partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule
- isolation from family and friends.

Respond

The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear, through workplace guidance, that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.

If an employee discloses information to you:

- be sensitive and non-judgemental
- treat all disclosures confidentially
- believe an employee's disclosure – do not ask for proof

- refer the employee to helplines, web resources and professional services
- if the employee or any colleagues are in immediate danger, call 999.

Be aware that one size does not fit all. Domestic abuse takes place at all levels of society regardless of social class, race, religion, sexuality or disability. Keep this in mind as different individuals may need varying support.

Support is also there for individuals who have previously experienced domestic abuse. The measures of lockdown may have triggered memories and emotions from previous experiences. It is important to offer continued support in these circumstances.

Provide support

Resources for employers

- [Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#)

Resources for employees

See Appendix A for a list of professional support services.