

Workplace Domestic Abuse Framework

Workplace Policy

This policy sets out the organisation's commitment to supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse and to maintaining a safe, respectful and accountable workplace. It should be read alongside the accompanying Implementation Guidelines.



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About this document

This policy forms part of the SafePolicy™ Free Baseline Series by Safe Haven Education. It should be read alongside the Implementation Guidelines, Employer's Toolkit, Manager Companion, and Disclosure Log.

Institutions investigate moments. Abusers operate across time.

Purpose

This policy sets out the organisation's commitment to supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse and to maintaining a safe, respectful and accountable workplace. We recognise that domestic abuse is a workplace issue and that employers have a role in prevention, early response and safety.

The organisation recognises the impact domestic abuse can have on employees' safety, wellbeing and ability to work, and is committed to responding in a supportive and informed manner.

This policy should be read alongside the organisation's safeguarding, absence, wellbeing, disciplinary and data protection policies where relevant.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of the organisation, including permanent and temporary employees, workers, contractors, interns and volunteers.

While statutory employment rights apply differently depending on employment status, the organisation is committed to offering support and a safe working environment to everyone working within the organisation.

The policy applies regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, background or role.

Our Commitment

We commit to:

- Treating all disclosures with sensitivity and respect
- Listening without judgement and avoiding victim-blaming language
- Providing reasonable workplace adjustments to support safety and wellbeing
- Maintaining confidentiality within legal and safeguarding limits
- Supporting employees to access specialist services and external support where appropriate
- Never penalising or disadvantaging an individual for experiencing domestic abuse
- Holding perpetrators accountable where abusive behaviour intersects with the workplace
- Ensuring managers and relevant staff are trained to recognise and respond appropriately

Understanding Domestic Abuse

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, domestic abuse includes behaviour between two connected adults aged 16 or over, including current or former partners, family members or carers.

Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right.

Abuse may be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour and includes:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour

- Threatening or violent behaviour
- Economic or financial abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Digital or technology-facilitated abuse
- Spiritual or culturally justified abuse, including forced marriage and so-called honour-based abuse
- Image-based abuse including the creation or distribution of AI-generated or manipulated content (e.g. deepfakes)
- Reputation-based abuse, including false allegations, malicious complaints, or fake online reviews intended to damage professional standing

Abuse may continue or escalate after separation. This can include ongoing harassment, stalking, reputational harm, or attempts to interfere with employment, including attending workplaces or professional events.

Recognising Possible Signs

Domestic abuse is often hidden and individuals may not disclose immediately. Managers and colleagues may notice changes such as:

- Increased lateness, absenteeism or difficulty attending work
- Repeated calls, messages or unexpected visits from a partner or former partner
- Withdrawal, anxiety or sudden behavioural changes
- Unexplained injuries or attempts to conceal injuries
- Sudden decline in performance or concentration
- Signs of monitoring or control over communication or devices

These signs do not confirm abuse but may indicate that a supportive conversation is appropriate. See the Implementation Guidelines for detailed guidance on how to approach this conversation.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

All disclosures will be handled confidentially on a need-to-know basis.

Confidentiality has limits. The organisation has a legal duty to escalate concerns where there is:

- Risk to children, including witnessing regular violence
- Credible threats to kill or cause serious harm
- Immediate danger to life
- Disclosure of forced marriage, FGM or honour-based abuse
- Indications of imminent suicide risk

Where escalation is required, this will be explained clearly to the employee and support will continue. The legal basis for sharing information will be documented. Information sharing will be limited to what is necessary and proportionate for safeguarding purposes.

Supporting Disclosures

Employees who choose to disclose domestic abuse will be treated with respect and empathy. Managers and designated contacts should:

- Listen without judgement
- Acknowledge the courage it takes to disclose abuse
- Avoid blaming or questioning why someone has not left a situation
- Explain the limits of confidentiality and available support options
- Signpost specialist services rather than attempting to act as counsellors

The organisation will aim to provide at least two trained points of contact for employees seeking support. Where possible, employees will be offered a choice regarding who they speak to, including the option of speaking to someone of the same gender.

Workplace Safety

The organisation will take reasonable steps to support safety at work. Measures may include adjustments to hours, duties, location, communication methods or security arrangements.

Safety planning may include:

- Adjustments to start and finish times
- Remote or office working adjustments where appropriate
- Changes to work phone numbers or email addresses
- Relocation of desk or workspace
- Security notifications where appropriate and with the employee's consent
- Measures for hybrid or remote working situations
- Payroll confidentiality and protection of personal data

Situations where both the affected individual and the alleged perpetrator work for the organisation will be managed carefully, with safety as the primary consideration. In these situations, access to internal systems, HR records and building management may need to be reviewed and restricted without delay.

Particular care will be taken in situations involving post-separation abuse, including risks associated with shared workplaces, office attendance or work-related events.

Pregnancy and Parental Leave

Domestic abuse may begin or escalate during pregnancy or the postnatal period. The organisation recognises that this can be a period of increased vulnerability and will take additional care to support employees during pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave.

Support may include maintaining safe and confidential communication during leave, reviewing workplace safety ahead of return to work, flexibility in return-to-work arrangements, and additional wellbeing and safeguarding

check-ins where appropriate.

Reasonable Adjustments and Leave

The organisation recognises that access to paid leave is critical to enabling safety and recovery. As a matter of best practice, the organisation will seek to provide a period of paid safe leave (recommended up to 10 days), with additional flexibility considered based on individual circumstances.

Statutory context

The Employment Rights Act 2025 has received Royal Assent. Employers should monitor commencement dates for provisions relating to domestic abuse leave entitlements and update this policy accordingly. The organisation is committed to implementing statutory entitlements as they come into force.

All requests for adjustments will be considered fairly and sensitively. This includes adjustments to working hours, workload, deadlines or location.

Record Keeping and Data Protection

Where disclosures are made, managers or HR may record relevant information in order to support safety planning. Records will:

- ✓ Contain factual information only
- ✓ Avoid personal opinions or assumptions
- ✓ Be stored securely and separately from general personnel records
- ✓ Be handled in accordance with UK GDPR and the organisation's data protection policies

Records will normally be retained in line with the organisation's standard HR record retention policies, unless safeguarding considerations require otherwise. A structured disclosure log is provided as part of the SafePolicy™ suite.

Addressing Perpetrators and Accountability

Abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.

Where an employee is alleged or found to have perpetrated domestic abuse, the organisation will take this seriously, particularly where:

- The behaviour impacts a colleague
- Workplace resources, including email, phone or systems, are used to facilitate abuse
- The behaviour creates risk to others in the workplace

The organisation may initiate disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal, restrict access to systems or premises, and implement risk management measures to protect staff.

Referral to specialist perpetrator programmes, such as the Respect Phoneline, may be offered, but this does not replace accountability or disciplinary action.

Victim safety will remain the primary consideration in all decisions.

Training

The organisation will ensure that managers, HR staff and designated contacts receive appropriate domestic abuse awareness training. Training may include recognising warning signs, responding to disclosures, and understanding safeguarding responsibilities. Training records will be maintained.

External Support

Employees will be signposted to specialist domestic abuse services. These may include:

- › **Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline:** 0808 2000 247 (24 hours, freephone)
- › **Men's Advice Line:** 0808 801 0327
- › **Galop** (LGBTQ+ domestic abuse support): 0800 999 5428
- › **Surviving Economic Abuse:** survivingeconomicabuse.org
- › **Karma Nirvana** (honour-based abuse): 0800 5999 247
- › **Revenge Porn Helpline:** revengepornhelpline.org.uk
- › **Right to Ask (Clare's Law):** individuals have the right to request information from the police about a partner's history of abusive behaviour

In situations of immediate danger, emergency services should be contacted by calling 999.

A full external resources directory is provided in the Implementation Guidelines.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with legislation, guidance and best practice. Feedback from employees is welcomed.

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For regulated sector governance frameworks, please see SafePolicy™ Professional Series.