

Domestic Abuse: Guidance for Managers and Staff

Aims

This guidance sets out the support that is available to those who work at the University who have experienced domestic abuse and provides advice to managers or staff on steps that can be taken to help employees who have been affected by domestic abuse to feel safe in the workplace.

The University opposes domestic abuse in all its forms and recognises that it is a widespread problem which can affect victims both physically and mentally. It is also committed to ensuring all staff are provided with a safe working environment, in which risks to health and wellbeing are considered and dealt with efficiently.

This guidance and approach are part of the University's commitment to a diverse, inclusive and caring working environment for all members of our community and seeks to support the welfare of individual members of staff, retain valued employees and improve morale and performance. We believe that this commitment enhances the reputation of the Bath Spa University as an employer and the experience of our employees.

Legislation

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act, 2015, ("the Act") created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or family relationships. Those who experience behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse, can now take forward action under the law in relation to the behaviour of their perpetrator.

Definition

Domestic abuse involves controlling, coercive threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. The abuse is usually between adults who are, or have been, in an intimate

relationship or family members. Domestic abuse is usually a pattern of behaviour although it can be a one-off event. It can take many forms, including:

- psychological abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- verbal abuse
- economic / financial abuse.

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 resources 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 or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.*

*This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Anyone can suffer from domestic abuse regardless of sex, race, sexuality or religion. It can occur at any time in a person's life, though may be triggered by specific events or become more extreme or frequent as a result of those events.

It is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal conviction.

Guidance for staff

Domestic abuse is an issue that affects all sections of society and is not just restricted to physical abuse. If you are a victim of domestic abuse, it is important to tell someone about it. A list of the contact details for a range of dedicated support organisations for those suffering domestic abuse is available here [Domestic Abuse Support](#). Advice is also available from Bath Spa University [Report and Support](#). [Appendix 1](#) also provides a list of professional support organisations.

You are encouraged to speak confidentially to your line manager. If you do not feel comfortable in speaking to your line manager, you may alternatively contact an HRBP [Human Resources - Home](#).

These individuals will be non-judgemental, take you seriously and take the time to listen. You can be assured that if you are experiencing domestic abuse and raise it with someone at the University, it will be treated in confidence and dealt with sensitively.

There are a number of ways that the University can support you. This could include:

- Amending your working arrangements
- Making time available for you to seek support from external organisations, including access to your legal support, in work time.
- Making emergency and safe contact arrangements
- Improving your safety whilst at work – including working with our Security team
- Reviewing communications and IT safety
- Supporting you through the Employee Assistance Programme provided by TELUS Health [Wellbeing and support](#)

There may be situations where, as a member of staff, a colleague confides to you that they are suffering domestic abuse. In this situation you should direct them to this guidance and encourage them to speak confidentially with the individuals as set out above in this section.

Students who identify possible domestic abuse issues

If a student makes you aware that they have experienced domestic abuse, please encourage them contact Student Wellbeing Services who will be able to provide confidential support and advice to them [Student Wellbeing Services](#) and to refer to Bath Spa University [Report and Support](#).

Guidance for Managers

Signs which may indicate that someone is experiencing domestic abuse may be:

- frequent absence from work, lateness or needing to leave work early
- reduced quality and quantity of work or missing deadlines
- spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason
- changes in the way an employee communicates - a large number of personal calls or texts or a strong reaction to personal calls
- physical signs and symptoms such as unexplained or frequent bruises or other injuries
- excessive clothing on a hot day
- changes in the amount of make-up worn
- changes in social behaviour, for example, not turning up to work social activities
- obsession with leaving work on time.

It is important to understand the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one important factor.

If you are approached by an employee who informs you that they have or are experiencing domestic abuse, please:

- Take the employee seriously and take the time to listen to them
- Make sure that any conversation is carried out privately and that you respect their confidentiality
- Make sure that you have their formal consent before contacting HR or an external support service on their behalf.
- Draw the employees' attention to the guidance that is available on the University webpages and from specialist support services
- Explore what internal help is available
- Seek advice from your HR Business Partner
- Recognise the limits of your role
- Be careful to not disclose their whereabouts to a third party (for example where someone calls into the department and asks if the member of staff is at work today)

Action to be taken if employee confides in a manager

Reassurance will be offered to the employee of the University's stance towards domestic abuse and outline the support that is to be offered. The employee will not be asked for evidence of abuse.

The manager should not directly involve themselves in the situation, by, for example, confronting someone accused of being abusive. Instead, the role of the manager in this situation is:

- to provide support to the employee in the workplace
- to help the employee find professional help. There is a list of organisations which provide professional support in [appendix 1](#).

In terms of practical assistance, the manager will:

- regularly check in with the employee
- permit use of Organisation equipment to search for online assistance or to speak to an expert who can help

- allow the employee time off to visit one of the advice organisations, the police or a doctor or to address concerns, such legal, financial or housing
- adjust targets to reduce any undue pressure on the employee
- agree code words or hand signals to be used during a telephone or video call to signal that the employee is in a threatening situation, and what action needs to be taken when one is used
- a salary advance to a bank account other than that which is normally used
- arrange for the employee's telephone extension number to be changed or calls to be diverted if the employee is receiving harassing telephone calls
- agree with the employee how they should respond if the perpetrator attends the workplace
- ensure that the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
- check that the employee has arrangements for safe travel between home and the workplace
- keep a record of incidents which occur in the workplace, eg harassing telephone calls or visits
- consider a temporary change to the employee's working patterns.

Managers should:

- avoid blaming the person experiencing domestic abuse
- encourage the employee to make contact with specialised organisations themselves, and report matters to the police
- not ask for proof or evidence of abuse
- be non-judgmental and supportive and
- respect the employee's privacy.

It may be helpful in this situation if the employee is encouraged to speak to their GP and the line manager may facilitate this by allowing time off for work for a visit to take place to any professional support organisation.

Confidentiality, right to privacy and safeguarding

Staff who disclose they are experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance for managers dealing with an employee who informs them that they are experiencing domestic abuse. However, there may be circumstances where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the Organisation needs to act to protect the safety of employees. In these circumstances the manager will discuss with the employee the reason for disclosing any information to a third party and will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential and in line with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and maybe subject to disciplinary action.

In circumstances where the University has to breach confidentiality it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, it will discuss with the employee why it is doing so, and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse

In line with the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, employees should inform their line managers and/or Human Resources, in confidence, of any changes to their criminal record status – i.e. being charged or convicted of a criminal conviction, in order that the impact on their suitability to undertake their role may be reviewed.

There are situations where a staff member's criminal conviction for domestic abuse outside of work may have an impact on their employment and will need to be investigated and considered under the University's [Disciplinary](#) Procedure.

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the University, it may be necessary to take appropriate action. Such as in addition to investigating and considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices.

Appendix 1

Professional help

The line manager should encourage the employee to seek professional help but should not make contact with them personally. This may include reporting instances of violence to the police, or seeking help from specialist organisations such as:

General

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247 (Freephone and 24 hour) / www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Citizens advice bureau - www.adviceguide.org.uk

National centre for domestic violence – 0800 970 2070 / www.ncdv.org.uk

Galop: 0800 999 5428 / www.galop.org.uk

For women

Women's aid - www.womensaid.org.uk

Scottish Women's aid – 0800 027 1234 / www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk

Welsh Women's aid - 0808 8010800 / www.welshwomensaid.org

Jewish Women's Aid - 0800 591203 / www.jwa.org.uk

Shakti Women's Aid (Scotland) - 0131 475 2399 / shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

Refuge - 0800 2000 247 / www.refuge.org.uk

Southall Black Sisters - 020 8571 9595 / www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Muslim Women's Helpline - 020 8904 8193 or 020 8908 6715 / www.mwnhelpline.co.uk

IKWRO: Women's rights organisation for Middle Eastern and Afghan women - 020 7920 6460 / ikwro.org.uk

For men

ManKind Initiative: 01823 334 244 / www.mankind.org.uk

Respect Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 / www.respect.uk.net

The Dyn Project (Wales): 0808 801 0321 / www.dynwales.org

For perpetrators

Respect: 0808 802 4040 / www.respect.uk.net