

# Domestic Abuse

## 1. Who does this policy apply to?

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers.

## 2. What is the purpose of this policy?

- 2.1 LCC is 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.
- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to recognise domestic abuse as an issue, 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), encourage open conversations between line managers and staff and to direct staff to relevant advice and assistance.

## 3. What roles do the employee, line managers, the Council and HR play in this policy?

### 3.1 Employee Responsibilities

- ❑ All staff members should be aware of domestic abuse so that they can support those experiencing abuse or otherwise affected by abuse. If employees have any concerns or recognise any of the signs of domestic abuse captured within this policy, they should deal with this sensitively and encourage the employee to speak with their line manager in confidence.

### 3.2 Line Manager Responsibilities

- ❑ Not to share with anybody else (even HR) the information disclosed by anybody to whom the policy applies (unless it must be shared in the interests of safety, to process any adjustments or with the employee's consent).
- ❑ To respond appropriately to and provide appropriate support to any staff who have disclosed domestic abuse.
- ❑ To direct all staff members who make disclosures of domestic abuse to the external sources of help captured in this policy.

### 3.3 HR Responsibilities

- ❑ To be on hand for any questions from line managers or anybody to whom the policy applies on the day-to-day application of this policy.

### 3.4 Council responsibilities

- ❑ To empower line managers to respond appropriately to any disclosures that are made.
- ❑ To ensure this policy is updated every two years or earlier in the event of any updates.

## 4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 Any information shared with a line manager about domestic abuse will be treated as highly confidential and will not be shared internally, including to HR, except where necessary and on a “need-to-know” basis.
- 4.2 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) (see paragraph 7.4 for more information). Individuals should not hesitate to speak with their line manager or a White Ribbon Ambassador if they have any concerns about how their information might be shared. Our White Ribbon Ambassadors are signposted [here](#).

## 5. Domestic abuse

- 5.1 Domestic abuse is abuse which takes place between two adults who are personally connected 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.
- 5.2 Domestic abuse is complex; it can take many forms and may involve a single incident or a course of conduct. Examples could include psychological, emotional, or economic abuse, physical or sexual abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour and violence or threats of violence. It can involve (among other things): exploitation, subordination, manipulation, humiliation, harassment, isolation, or intimidation. It can be related to faith or be honour-based. It may not necessarily be directed at the victim but nevertheless be intended to cause them distress (for example it may be directed at children within the family unit or a colleague). It is extremely serious and may result in criminal proceedings.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 LCC recognises 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 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.

## 6. Domestic abuse IS a workplace issue

- 6.1 Abuse that an individual experiences at home is likely to have a direct impact on every aspect of their life, including their work life. Staff members who work from home may lack a space away from the perpetrator of the domestic abuse. Domestic abuse may also extend to the workplace itself 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).
- 6.2 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, sabotaging career prospects (for example, by attempting to undermine an individual’s reputation at work) controlling working hours or ability to participate in work-related activities, making the victim late for work or insisting on driving them to and from work, destroying work clothes, isolating the victim from colleagues, demanding earnings be paid into a specific bank account or diverting monies paid into a joint account, destroying the victim’s confidence so that they feel unable to work, and causing injuries that result in sickness absence.

- 6.3 LCC acknowledges that domestic abuse may be experienced by any staff member, irrespective of their level of seniority or role within the organisation. LCC also recognises that a staff member's children who have seen, heard or experienced the domestic abuse are also victims. Whatever the individual's role, LCC recognises 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.
- 6.4 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 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. LCC will seek to identify ways in which it 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.

## 7. Encouraging open conversations

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 We do not expect staff members to become experts on domestic abuse, but we do expect all staff members to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected. We also encourage all staff members to be familiar with some of the signs of domestic abuse, whilst also recognising that these signs may be indicative of other issues. These signs include persistent lateness or absenteeism, or conversely, spending an increased number of hours at work for no obvious reason, reduced quantity or quality of work, webcams being turned off during video calls, changes in appearance such as make up or clothing that conceals injuries, withdrawal from or lack of participation in work-related meetings and events, isolation from friends, family and work colleagues, regular interruptions during the working day (such as receiving multiple text messages which the individual looks distressed by) and control of finances (for example wages being paid into a new bank account).
- 7.3 Anyone affected by domestic abuse should be made to feel comfortable to speak with their line manager or a member of Human Resources about the support they may need in relation to work. Alternatively, they may contact one of our White Ribbon Ambassadors. 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.
- 7.4 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 a White Ribbon Ambassador) 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.
- 7.5 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. The records will be handled confidentially and will never form part of an individual'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. We encourage staff members to let their line managers know what arrangements or adjustments may be helpful in their circumstances and any adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs of the victim and the business. We understand that victims' needs will vary, but we are committed to offering the following where possible and appropriate:
- i. Paid time off work, up to a maximum of 2 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.
  - ii. Temporary adjustments to work patterns, hours or duties, as well as temporary flexible working arrangements outside those offered under our Flexible Working Policy.
  - iii. Safe methods of communication (for example, providing a new work email address or telephone number).
  - iv. An agreed code word or hand signal, so an individual can discreetly alert colleagues that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
  - v. A quiet room to make and receive confidential telephone calls during working hours.
  - vi. Diversion of telephone calls and emails from a list agreed with any victim of domestic abuse.
  - vii. Removal of the victim's work contact details and photographs from our company website and other public platforms operated by us.
  - viii. 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.
  - ix. Temporary redeployment to another role or work location, where possible.
  - x. Access to office space when an individual would otherwise be working from home.
  - xi. Changes to office-based seating arrangements to ensure that a victim is sitting in a safe place and not in an isolated area on their own.
  - xii. Payment of wages into a different bank account.
- 8.2 We encourage victims 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 any council webpage 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 a discussion with the victim, we will ensure that it is the perpetrator's, not the victim's work arrangements that are changed.

- 8.5 If there are any changes put in place to support a victim, we will always seek to agree with the victim what will be communicated to colleagues if any changes are obvious and may require explanation.

## 9. Disciplinary action against perpetrators

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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. We may consider conduct relevant to the individual's employment if it is possible that the conduct could bring LCC into disrepute or if the conduct is such that we must consider our duty of care to other members of LCC should there be a real risk of violence or abuse towards them.

## 10. When will this policy be reviewed?

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier in the event of changes in legislation.

### Document Control:

Version no.	Effective Date	Reason	Review due
1.0	02.02.2016	New policy agreed by Personnel Committee	02.02.2018
2.0	25.02.2019	Policy Review	25.02.2021
3.0		Policy Redraft [agreed by JCC and People and OD Committee]	

## FAQs:

## Where can perpetrators go for further help and support?

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 such as from:

- [Respect](#), provides help for perpetrators of domestic violence.

## Where can victims go for further help and support?

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, one of our White Ribbon Ambassadors 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](#) (**0900 999 5428**), 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.