

Domestic Abuse: Guidance for Managers and Staff

Introduction

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 of 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 is 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 University of Bath as an employer and the experience of our employees.

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 attached at **Appendix 2**.

You are encouraged to speak confidentially to your line manager, [HR Business Partner or Advisor](#), or a trade union representative. 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](#) and [Education Support Partnership](#)

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 Services directly on ext. **4321** / 01225 384321 who will be able to provide confidential support and advice to them.

Guidance for Managers

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 a third party on their behalf. This is subject to the section on confidentiality and safeguarding - see below on page 4.
- 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 or Advisor](#)
- 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)

Listen - The most important aspect of this conversation is to encourage the individual to speak about their situation. You may be the first person they have approached and raising the issue takes a great deal of courage and the response that you provide may be a crucial factor as to whether they seek further support. There may also be situations where you initiate a confidential conversation with the staff member if you have concerns – see the section on identifying possible domestic abuse below. Such a conversation should be handled very sensitively and you should seek advice from your HR Business Partner or Advisor before initiating it.

Act - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have developed a list of ten actions (attached as **Appendix 1**) that can be taken to help manage domestic abuse in the workplace. These actions identify how managers can recognise the problem, respond to it, provide support and refer individuals on for further support. There is also the extremely useful [Guidance to Universities provided by the HARM Network](#), which gives detailed guidance for Universities and the actions that we need to follow.

Support - As a manager you should encourage the staff member to seek support from specialist domestic abuse support services (see **Appendix 2**) and through the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) and [Education Support Partnership](#) which University staff are able to access and use free of charge. Support is also available through their accredited Trade Union.

Identifying possible domestic abuse

The organisation '[Living without abuse](#)' reports that one in four women and one in six men will be affected by domestic abuse in their lifetime. Many victims do not feel confident about informing their employer that they have experienced domestic abuse and are not aware of the support available.

Whilst it is for the individual themselves to recognise that they are a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate this, such as:

- The member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager
- Staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse.
- There may be obvious effects of physical abuse (it is important not to make assumptions).
- It may come to light as a result of enquiries into a drop in performance or a significant change in behaviour.
- It may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance.

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

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 of domestic violence and/or abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents 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. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional
- electronic

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.

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.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of fellow staff.

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.

Wherever possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and would, if found following investigation, constitute a disciplinary offence and be subject to disciplinary action in line with the relevant [disciplinary policy](#).

The disclosure of domestic abuse may also lead to the disclosure of other sensitive confidential information. In these cases, due regard should be paid to the double impact of disclosure. For example, a disclosure of domestic abuse in a same sex relationship could lead to disclosure of someone's sexual orientation, and the individual(s) affected may not be out at work.

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 Policy & Procedure.

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the University, it will be necessary to take appropriate action.

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:

Ten Key Actions for Managers from the Equality & Human Rights Commission

Recognise the problem

1. Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record
2. Look for changes in the way an employee dresses i.e. excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn

Respond

3. Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse - do not ask for proof
4. Reassure the employee that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered

Provide support

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls
6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/ partner telephones or visits the workplace
7. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse on the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace
9. Put up domestic abuse helpline posters in appropriate places (e.g. on the back of toilet doors)

Refer to the appropriate help

10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse.

Appendix 2:

Domestic Abuse Helplines and support organisations

Service	Description	Contact
The HARM Network	The HARM network, based at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) has conducted research and consulted with leading experts to present policymakers with this guidance to support students and staff suffering domestic abuse who are at UK universities.	Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities This detailed guidance gives further information on what to do if you suspect that a student or staff member is suffering from domestic abuse.
Domestic Violence Helpline (Freephone)	A service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends and others calling on their behalf.	0808 2000 247 http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
Living without abuse	A service to provide help and support for ANYONE suffering abuse	Helpline - 0808 80 200 28 (Mon to Sat. 8am to 8pm) The Helpline is available for anyone wishing to access support from LWA or the wider UAVA services. The helpline can also provide advice and support to friends and family members. Business Line - 0116 255 0004 (Mon to Fri. 9 to 5pm) Information and advice for professionals http://www.lwa.org.uk/
Women's Aid	A service that is 'working together until women and children are safe'	0808 2000247 https://www.womensaid.org.uk/
Men's Advice Helpline	A confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence.	0808 801 0327 http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/
Broken Rainbow for (LGBT)	The LGBT Domestic Violence Service	0300 999 5428 (0300 numbers are charged at local rate, and may show up on your itemised bill - please check before calling) Freephone number 0800 999 5428 http://www.broken-rainbow.co.uk/
Samaritans	24/7 phone and other support to make sure fewer people die by suicide	116 123 https://www.samaritans.org/
Southall Black Sisters	a not-for-profit, secular and inclusive organisation, to	Help Line 0208 571 0800

	<p>meet the needs of Black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women including challenging all forms gender-related violence against women and empower them to gain more control over their lives</p>	<p>Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:30 am – 4:30 pm</p> <p>General Inquiries 0208 571 9595 Monday to Friday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/</p>
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