

Schools Domestic Abuse Policy

Supporting victims and challenging the behaviour of perpetrators



Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Introduction

In December 2013, Durham's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) produced, in partnership with Cleveland and Northumbria's PCC, a regional Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

One of the priorities of the regional strategy was promoting guidance for employers to make sure that anyone affected can find confidential support at work and be helped to safety.

Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority of the Safe Durham Partnership of which Durham County Council is a member.

Research by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission shows that, nationally, 20% women take time off work due to experiencing domestic abuse, 2% lose employment as a direct result and 75% victims are targeted at work. It costs UK businesses £2.7 billion a year due to losses in productivity, poor performance, low attendance and emotional/physical health.

Data shows that around 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience some form of domestic abuse (Crime Survey of England and Wales 2013/14). Domestic abuse happens across all social backgrounds and cultures and causes lifelong harm to victims and their children. The school has a duty to raise awareness of the issues internally and signpost appropriate specialist support in relation to issues that affect the health and wellbeing of employees.

The school has a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 and associated Health and Safety legislation, to ensure, where reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

By working to eliminate risks related to domestic violence/abuse in the workplace, the school is able to create a safer working environment for its employees.

For some employees, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety.

The school acknowledges that domestic abuse is a significant problem, which has a devastating impact on victims and their families. This policy document represents a commitment to take all reasonable steps possible to combat the reality and impact of domestic abuse on those employees being abused and to challenge the behaviour of employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

This policy document ensures that the victims of domestic abuse who work within the school are aware of the support that is available. It also provides guidance to Headteachers on how to support employees who are affected by domestic abuse.

It is important to note that domestic abuse is not condoned under any circumstances and all employees must behave appropriately and professionally at all times.

2 Definition

Domestic abuse is defined by the Home Office as ‘Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 16 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or are family members, regardless of gender and sexuality.’ This definition includes honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of self-esteem to loss of life. See supporting document A - Types of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity. When dealing with domestic abuse it is important to recognise differences between all protected characteristics. It follows that different approaches and resources are needed when addressing domestic abuse with different groups.

3 Who does the policy apply to?

This policy covers all school based employees.

4 The impact of domestic abuse in the workplace

It should be noted that there may be incidents which occur in the workplace or specifically affect the work of an employee.

Possible signs of domestic abuse include:

- Changes in behaviour including uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration;
- Changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason;
- Arriving late or leaving early;
- Poor attendance or high presenteeism without an explanation;
- Needing regular time off for appointments;
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing.

5 The impact of domestic abuse on work colleagues

Domestic abuse also affects people close to the victim and this can include work colleagues.

Some effects may include:

- Being followed to or from work;
- Being subject to questioning about the victim's contact details or locations;
- Covering for colleagues when they are absent from work;
- Trying to deal with the abuse and fearing their own safety;
- Being unaware of the abuse or not knowing how to help;
- An overall impact on team dynamics, working relationships and behaviours in the workplace.

6 The impact of domestic abuse on the employer

Some effects may include:

- Negative impact on productivity, performance and morale;
- Employee turnover, as employees may have to leave work or move away to escape abuse.

The school expects all employees to report their concerns if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. In the first instance, they should speak to their Headteacher about their concerns in confidence. Alternatively they can ring Durham Constabulary on 101.

7 Confidentiality and the right to privacy

Employees who disclose that they are a victim of domestic abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other colleagues without their permission.

There are however, some circumstances in which the employer's duty of care is the overriding factor, and confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when there are concerns regarding children, vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of their employees. In these circumstances, the employee will be informed as to the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

8 Support for employees

There are a number of ways in which employees experiencing domestic abuse can be supported by the school:

- Through offering practical support as detailed in 9.1.2;
- Raising awareness generally of the issues;
- Signposting to an appropriate counselling support;
- Taking a clear anti-abuse stance against perpetrators.

See supporting document D – specialist support available in County Durham.

It is essential that employees feel able to disclose this personal information and are encouraged to discuss this with their Headteacher. However if they feel unable to raise this with their Headteacher, support is available from the Human Resources (HR) Advice and Support Team or via self-referral to specialist support services.

9 Support for Headteachers

9.1 Victims

9.1.1 Identifying domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is unlikely to be disclosed easily by victims or perpetrators. There are a number of steps that can be taken to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse including how to recognise the problem, respond, provide support, refer to the appropriate help and record the contact. This is referred to as the 'Four R's':

- **Recognise**;
- **Respond** appropriately;
- **Refer** on to appropriate help;
- **Record** the details.

It is recognised that this is a difficult area to discuss and further guidance is available to support Headteachers. See section 10 - supporting documents.

Detailed records should be kept of all discussions and actions agreed. All records should be treated 'strictly confidential'. See supporting document E for a Domestic Abuse Record Form.

If Headteachers require further advice or assistance before speaking to an employee, further support is available from the HR Advice and Support Team.

9.1.2 Support available

A Headteacher's role is not to deal with the abuse itself, but to make it clear that employees will be supported and outline what help is available.

Headteachers may consider offering a broad range of practical support to employees experiencing domestic abuse including:

- Time off for relevant appointments, for example with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments;
- Special leave provisions (e.g. compassionate leave or unpaid leave);
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns using existing procedures i.e. flexible working;
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with the perpetrator;
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example blocking emails/screening telephone calls; alerting reception if the perpetrator is known to come to the workplace; and checking arrangements are in place for safely travelling to and from work;
- Advising colleagues on a need-to-know basis and agreeing a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace;
- Providing a photograph of the perpetrator to the Headteacher and reception;
- Reviewing the security of personal information held, such as temporary or new address and bank details.

All school employees have access to a free service, offering a confidential telephone counselling and information service which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Telephone counselling can provide emotional support in helping a person work through a range of personal and/or work related issues. To access this [telephone counselling service](#) (provided by EmployeeCare) call Freephone: 0800 716 017 day or night and quote the scheme number 33679.

Advice and information is also available via the on-line service www.employeeecare.com - enter the scheme number, 33679, into both the 'Access Code' and 'Password' boxes to log in.

Employees are able to self-refer to Durham County Council's Occupational Health Service (OHS) by email: occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk or telephone: 03000 268 999. Further information on [OHS](#) is available via the intranet.

The right of employees to make their own decision about the course of action at every stage will be respected. It is recognised that an employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try different options during this process.

9.2 How perpetrators will be dealt with who work for the school

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstance. Employees should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter which can lead to criminal convictions. Conduct outside of work may lead to disciplinary action being taken against an employee, up to and including dismissal, depending on the circumstances in line with the school's Code of Conduct, employees are expected to maintain high standards of conduct. However, the school recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting perpetrators to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee discloses perpetrating domestic abuse, the police should be informed as well as the HR Advice and Support Team so that the disciplinary or other internal procedures can be considered. However, the employee will be provided with information about the services and support available to them. This procedure can be applicable in cases where an employee has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner;
- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them;
- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship.

The school will ensure:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure;
- Guidance and support will be available for all employees.

The accused employee will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly;
- Helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved;
- Kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process.

9.3 Victims and perpetrators working for the school

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse work for the school, appropriate action will be taken in accordance with this policy document.

In addition to considering potential disciplinary action against the perpetrator, appropriate action may be required to manage contact between the victim and perpetrator in the workplace.

In certain situations e.g. where the victim has moved home, action may 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. Further advice can be sought from the HR Advice and Support Team.

10 Supporting documents

The following supporting documents can be downloaded from the extranet:

A	Types of domestic abuse
B	Steps to address the effects of domestic abuse
C	Asking difficult questions – guidance for Headteachers
D	Domestic abuse – specialist support available in County Durham
E	Domestic Abuse Record Form

In addition the following document is also available via the extranet:

	Code of Conduct
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11 Further information

11.1 Confidentiality

The school complies with all relevant statutory obligations. For more information please contact the school directly.

The school privacy notice provides more specific information on the data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed from the school.

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the school Data Protection Officer (details available from the school office), or the Information Commissioner's Office.

11.2 Dealing with abuses of the policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The school takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action being taken through the disciplinary procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

11.3 Equality and diversity

The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated.

Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

11.4 Contact details

'Sorry's not enough' is a campaign supported by a range of agencies that cover County Durham and Darlington. The website details organisations within County Durham, Darlington and nationally which can offer help and support - www.sorrystnotenough.co.uk

Further information is available on the extranet (by searching 'domestic abuse') and on the Durham County Council website – www.durham.gov.uk

See supporting document E – specialist support available in County Durham.

If you require any further advice please contact:

- **Public Health Practitioner, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**

Email: public.health@durham.gov.uk

Tel: 03000 267 660

- **Human Resources (HR) Advice and Support Team**

Email: hradviceandsupport@durham.gov.uk

Tel: 03000 265 345

- **Occupational Health Service (OHS)**

Email: occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk

Tel: 03000 268 999

- **Telephone Counselling Service**

Freephone: 0800 716 017 (Quote scheme number 33679)

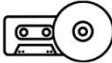
- www.employeecare.com - enter the scheme number, 33679, into both the 'Access Code' and 'Password' boxes to log in.

If you would like this document in an alternative format, please contact the HR Advice and Support Team using the contact details below:

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

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