

Domestic Abuse Policy



| Date | Author | Version | Reason for change |
|------------|--|-----------|-------------------|
| March 2021 | Head of HR Business Partnering & DA Working Group members | Version 1 | New Policy |

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Introduction

The University has developed this policy as part of its commitment to supporting employees' health, safety and wellbeing at work. It contains information for employees as well as guidance for managers and colleagues on how best to support someone who discloses domestic abuse.

LSBU is committed to zero tolerance of domestic abuse against and by its entire staff, recognising that it:

- is a crime, which is disruptive and socially harmful;
- can affect an individual's health, performance or attendance at work and that it may have continued for several years before they feel able to disclose it at work; and
- can affect anyone regardless of sex, gender, class, race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, marital status or sexual orientation.

Managers are expected to follow the advice set out in this policy and can seek advice from the Head of HR Business Partnering if approached by a member of staff for support.

Definitions

The University has adopted the following definitions from the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020:

Domestic abuse: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate¹ partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional forms of abuse.

Controlling behaviour: 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 (including financial means), resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour: 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.

Stalking: repeated, unwanted contact from one person to another which causes the victim to feel distressed or fearful. It differs from harassment in that a perpetrator of stalking will have an obsession with or fixation on the individual(s) they are targeting.

Stalking is a criminal offence under the Protection of Freedoms Act (2012). Stalking can form part of a pattern of domestic abuse behaviour but is not always the case.

Abusive behaviour may also include:

'Honour' based violence: Abusive or controlling behaviour is not necessarily limited to current or former partners; the abuse can be perpetrated by family members and may be because the family and/or community feel the 'honour' code is being threatened.

This 'honour' based violence relates to a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'.

¹ In this context, the term 'intimate' means 'close relationship' not solely sexual relationship

Often there are multiple perpetrators from the immediate and extended family and/or community. In addition to the forms of abuse outlined above this behaviour can also include practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced abortion and forced marriage.

Technological abuse: Abuse can also take place online, in addition to, or instead of, face to face. Persistent surveillance that makes you feel uncomfortable i.e. checking where you are and who you are with, controlling your use of mobile phones, social media sites and/or demanding access to your online accounts can all be forms of technological abuse.

It also includes the sending of abusive/degrading messages, controlling who you speak to, when and for how long or posting/threatening to post intimate images online.

Confidentiality

If disclosing domestic abuse, you will be encouraged to provide safe contact numbers and addresses so any correspondence between you and the University maintains your personal safety.

Where you are working at home, you will be able to identify the best ways by which the University can correspond with you safely. These might include agreed safe words or phrases which indicate either you are unable to speak or call, or that you have the privacy to speak safely to a colleague.

You may also wish to agree that your manager will request that you 'attend work' to enable you to leave home without suspicions being raised, (see Appendix 1 for an example email).

Where you believe you may be in imminent danger of serious violence within or when leaving the workplace, please discuss this with your manager and the Head of Security. Where necessary, the Police should also be involved.

Confidentiality can only be broken in the following circumstances:

- With the consent of the individual;
- Where required by law;
- If it is unequivocally in the public interest/where failure to disclose information may expose the individual or others to the risk of death or serious harm;
- If it will prevent a serious risk to public health and serious crime;
- Where there are concerns relating to a child or vulnerable adult.

Advice to Staff

If you are experiencing domestic abuse it is important to **tell someone**, and a list of contact details for various dedicated local and national support agencies can be found via the [Sources of Support webpage](#).

You are also encouraged to speak with your line manager if you are concerned about or are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers will not ask you for proof, they will be non-judgemental, they will take you seriously and take the time to listen.

If you prefer, you could also speak with a different colleague, to the University's [Employee Assistance and Support Service](#) and/or your HR Advisor or Business Partner.

Guidance is also available on the UKVI website for staff who are resident in the UK on a dependent's visa who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse.

Advice to Managers and Colleagues when domestic abuse is disclosed

If an employee approaches you at work for advice, make sure the conversation takes place in private. It may also be appropriate to offer the option of speaking to the Head of HR Business Partnering or Employee Assistance Provider service.

The most important aspect of this conversation is to encourage the employee to speak about their situation, with whomever they are comfortable speaking to.

You should notify the employee that you will make a note of the date and time of the conversation and any other important information that may be relevant later and that this sensitive data shall be treated in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

You should also ensure that you have written consent from the employee if they request that you contact a support agency on their behalf.

The *Equality and Human Rights Commission* and the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* have jointly developed a list of actions to help manage domestic abuse in the workplace (See Appendix 2). These actions highlight how managers can recognise the problem, respond to it, provide support and refer to appropriate help.

Additional support may also be needed by employees working entirely from home, so line managers should check in frequently with employees so they can raise any concerns or worries and offer support. This is even more important for remote workers who are likely to feel more isolated and potentially vulnerable.

Managers should also consider liaising with the Head of the University's Security team, but this must only be done with the express permission of the employee and after consultation with the University's Data Protection Officer.

You may be the first person an employee has confided in and raising this issue will have taken a great deal of courage. As a result they may be very upset, or in a state of panic, or conversely very calm, so it may therefore be difficult to understand what exactly they are disclosing. Regardless of their appearance, it is important that you ask them to confirm the best way you can share information with them, so they can reflect on this information in a safe way and make informed choices.

The response the employee receives from you may be a crucial factor as to whether they seek further help and support. You should therefore ensure that support is offered in an empathetic, sensitive and non-judgemental way, reassuring them that they are in a difficult situation but are not alone

The employee should not feel pressurised into disclosing personal information they do not feel comfortable sharing, especially as they may need some time to decide what to do.

You should also be sympathetic and creative in exploring options with staff where it is necessary for them to arrange appointments with solicitors, re-housing, education or childcare agencies during the normal working day. Examples of other support which might be appropriate include:

1. Temporary adjustments to working hours or work location
2. Agreed mechanisms to protect employees required to work at home
3. Access to safe onsite parking where this is not already provided
4. For staff working from home they may wish to receive a 'management instruction' to work from campus to enable them to leave their home.

Other supportive actions may also be taken, some of which would require prior consultation with the University's Data Protection Officer.

Employees should be offered paid leave to attend civil or criminal court hearings as a witness, or if required to attend court to seek an injunction against a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Where a perpetrator seeks to damage the reputation of an employee as a form of domestic abuse (e.g. making malicious allegations of misconduct or criminal activity, or by preventing them from undertaking their role in a professional way, such as preventing them attending meetings), you should, with the permission of the employee involved, alert the Head of HR Business Partnering to ensure the employee can be supported and that the University provides an appropriate response to the perpetrator.

Salary advances or hardship loans for employees facing difficulties because of their situation can be discussed with the Head of HR Business Partnering. The employee can request this from the Head of HR Business Partnering directly, or their manager can request this on their behalf with the written consent of the employee. However, please be aware financial abuse can be a form of domestic abuse.

A list of local and national support agencies can be found on our [Sources of Support webpage](#).

Should the person disclosing abuse and the alleged perpetrator both have a connection to the University, advice should be sought from the Head of HR Business Partnering, so that co-ordinated action can be taken to ensure the disclosing employee's safety and wellbeing.

Overlap with other policies

It may be appropriate for an employee to be supported using the University's Flexible Working or Sickness Absence policies, but as support needs will vary according to individual circumstances, managers should liaise with the Head of HR Business Partnering to ensure fairness and consistency

Equality and Diversity

Statistics show that women have traditionally borne the brunt of domestic abuse. We know however that men can suffer domestic abuse from women and that domestic abuse happens in same sex relationships. Our support will therefore be unequivocal in supporting anyone who suffers from this.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there is a specific legislative, regulatory or service requirement or change in guidance, law or practice.

APPENDIX 1

Example Email requesting employee 'attend work' on campus

Dear *(Name)*

I would be grateful if you would come onto campus at *(time)* on *(date)* for a meeting with other colleagues and me in my office/meeting room *(insert location details)*.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss *(insert details which are appropriate to the employee's work and would therefore not arouse suspicion if the email is read by an abusive partner)*.

Look forward to seeing you then.

Kind Regards

APPENDIX 2

EHRC & CIPD Guidance – Updated September 2020

The Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) have published a framework of support consisting of four key steps:

Recognise the problem

- Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.
- Look for changes in the way an employee dresses, for example excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn. This is obviously not as easy to do with remote working, which may have increased during COVID-19 and continue to be implemented going forward, but could be picked up in video meetings.
- Domestic abuse is often a hidden problem and individuals can find it very difficult to disclose. Some employees might not think they are experiencing domestic abuse and might not use these words to describe their experiences. However, they might talk about behaviour from their partner that is violent, abusive or coercively controlling. Ask open and empathetic questions, such as:
 - How are you doing at the moment?
 - How are things at home?
 - Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
 - I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
- Treat everyone as an individual as everyone's situation will be different. It is important not to make assumptions about what someone is experiencing or what they need.
- Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, and although more women are affected, it can happen to men and in same-sex relationships.
- Be very careful when raising things with people working from home, as the abuser might be monitoring the employee's email or other methods of communication. Even asking open questions in an email, or in a call when it is not known who else is listening, might ring alarm bells with the abuser and cause more abuse.

Respond

- Show empathy and compassion when responding to an employee's disclosure of experiencing domestic abuse. Think about how you might best be able to do this if you cannot be physically together and how you might continue to show that support when you are not sharing a workspace.
- Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof.
- Do not make assumptions about what someone is experiencing or what they need. This includes not assuming the gender of someone's partner or that people from different cultural backgrounds will have the same needs.

- Reassure the employee that the organisation understands how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and outline the support that can be offered.
- If the survivor and perpetrator work in the same business, the perpetrator could have access to personal information, depending on their role. So, in this circumstance, the Head of HR Business Partnering should be informed immediately so personal records can be protected appropriately.

Provide support

- Make sure that line managers are checking in frequently with employees so that they can raise any concerns or worries, offer support such as flexibility, and signpost them to professional support. This is even more important for remote workers, and those who are continuing to work from home following COVID-19, who are likely to feel more isolated and potentially vulnerable.
- Line managers should ask the individual about what support they need and regularly check in with that question, as the support they need may change over time as the circumstances change. Let the individual take the lead in what they want to talk about and what they think the problem is.
- Ask the individual about the best way to keep in contact with them, for example which communication methods are private and which they have easy access to.
- Offer flexibility in working hours to enable an employee to sort out financial, housing, legal and childcare issues. The flexibility required may differ in the short and longer term.
- Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
- Ensure non-employees cannot easily access the building.
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace or is present during a virtual meeting.
- 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.
- Support an individual's request to get advice on where and how to obtain a protection/barring order that covers the workplace.
- Think about specific areas of the work environment where the survivor's physical safety may be at risk, for example the workplace car park.
- With the consent of the employee, agree code words, or hand signals in video calls, so if they don't come into the office, or if they are in a threatening situation while working at home, there are set phrases both parties can say to enable them to flag if they are in danger. Also agree what action a signal requires, for example if to call the police, or if to provide information about available support.
- Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace or any concerns that the employee reports, as well as anything that occurs around the workplace, such as during travel to and from work or to meetings not held in the usual place of work. Also record the support offered.

- Share domestic abuse helpline posters in physical and virtual spaces (such as on the back of toilet doors, the intranet etc).
- Consider if there are ways that you can offer financial support, such as providing interest-free loans to cover immediate financial costs, like deposits for new housing. Also think about providing emergency financial support to help someone facing an immediate crisis, such as through a salary advance.
- Give employees who you know are experiencing domestic abuse first refusal to return to the work environment when it is safe to do so.
- Employees experiencing domestic abuse may need to leave their area of usual work in order to escape the perpetrator, and/or to receive additional support. In these cases, managers should work with the employee and senior staff to find ways for the survivor to keep their role, or move to a comparable one. This may involve working in a different office, from home, and so on.
- Some of these measures should only be used with the authorisation of the individual concerned. All support options should be survivor-oriented, and the person's wishes, safety and wellbeing should take priority in all matters and procedures.

Refer to the appropriate help

- Managers should not adopt the role of counsellor, but rather they should signpost employees to specialist help.

APPENDIX 3

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Emergency Support

If you or anyone else is in immediate danger, you should call **999**. If it not safe for you to speak, you can use **Silent Solution** on most modern mobile phones.

London South Bank University Support

Safeguarding

To report any concerns, if there is not an immediate risk of harm, you should contact a designated safeguarding officer by emailing helpsafeguard@lsbu.ac.uk. You can use this service to report a concern for yourself, a fellow staff member or a student by providing brief details of your concerns and your contact details. For more information, please see the [Safeguarding Policy Page](#)

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

All LSBU staff can access the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#) for free and confidential telephone or face-to-face counselling support and advice on a range of issues including domestic abuse.

- **Call** 0800 882 4102 (available 24/7)
- **Website** - <https://www.pam-assist.com/>. **Username:** LSBUEAP and **Password:** LSBU1

External Support

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247 - free 24 hr support.

Women's Aid: offers support via email, forums and live chat (open Mon-Fri, 10 am to 4 pm, Sat and Sun, 10 am to 12 pm). helpline@womensaid.org.uk.

Solace: support with all forms of violence against women and girls, Advice Line - 0808 802 5565 (Mon – Fri, 10 am to 4 pm, and 6 pm to 8pm on Tues)

Men's Advice Line: help for male victims of abuse - 0808 8010 327 (open Mon-Fri, 9 am to 8 pm) and webchat (Wed, Thur. & Fri: 10 to 11am & 3 to 4pm).

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0800 999 5428 (Mon-Fri, 10 am to 5 pm, Wed to Thurs, 10 am to 8 pm)

Southall Black Sisters: offers support via phone, email and blogs and live chat - 0208 571 9595 Open: Monday to Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm Closed for Lunch 12:30pm to 1:30pm

Sistah Space: domestic abuse services for African heritage women and girls. www.sistahspace.org

Karma Nirvana: support for victims of 'honour-based abuse or forced marriage. UK Helpline: 0800 599 9247 (Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm).

Safe Spaces - Boots, Superdrug, Morrisons and independent pharmacies offer 'safe spaces' for those seeking support from domestic abuse. The Post Office also offer online safe spaces - see *UK Says No More* for further information

Hestia's Bright Sky App: provides support and information to those concerned that someone they know is experiencing domestic abuse. Free to download.

RESPECT: for practical information and advice on domestic abuse for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends. Confidential and anonymous helpline: 0808 802 4040 (Mon - Fri, 9am to 8pm).