Domestic Abuse – Guidance for Staff

Introduction

It is estimated that one quarter of women and one sixth of men experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. Individuals may experience abuse or be affected by it long after they have left their partner.

The University recognises that members of staff can be affected by domestic abuse, and this may have an impact on their safety, wellbeing, and ability to work. The University is committed to ensuring all members of staff are provided with a safe working environment, in which risks to health and wellbeing are considered and staff are supported.

This guidance aims to support members of staff at risk as well as signposting to relevant and appropriate further information and specialist support. It is also aimed at helping those who have concerns that a colleague may be experiencing abuse, or who may receive a disclosure, to respond appropriately.

Definition

The Home Office defines domestic abuse as 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 and sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that people who experience this abuse are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Identifying domestic abuse

Members of staff may choose to seek support and assistance through speaking to a line manager, trade union representative, Human Resources or a colleague. A member of staff may also step forward to raise concerns about a colleague who they suspect is experiencing domestic abuse. It is important to be aware of potential signs that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse. These signs can include, but are not limited to:
Visible signs of domestic abuse such as bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations.

Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards.

Change in the person’s working patterns, i.e. frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early.

Change in the use of the phone/email: for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails.

Spending an increased amount of hours at work for no reason.

Changes in behaviour or demeanour

Stress, anxiety or depression.

Managers and colleagues can provide and signpost support but any action taken must come from the individual or be taken with their consent.

Advice for Line Managers

If a member of staff discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it can be challenging for the manager too. Managers are advised to listen, respond sensitively, offer workplace support and signpost to external support services (found at the end of this document). Managers should not counsel colleagues, however colleagues can access confidential telephone counselling via the Staff Wellbeing Confidential Support.

The following guidance when responding to a disclosure may help:

Suggest that you go somewhere quiet and comfortable, away from the office/desk if possible.

Acknowledge the courage of the member of staff and how difficult it must be to talk.

Confirm the complete confidentiality of the disclosure. As a guide for managers, any information should only be disclosed to anyone else if it is absolutely necessary in providing help and support and with the prior agreement of the person who has disclosed. Exceptions to that are if the manager believes there is an imminent threat to life, harm of children, or threat against the employer. At that point, the manager should inform Human Resources and contact the police and follow their advice on next steps.

Have an open posture. Reach towards them but be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space.

Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful.

Do not be judgemental. Avoid language that indicates blame or fault (“Why don’t you leave?” / “How can you let this happen?” / “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”) Allow plenty of time and space for them to speak.
If necessary and practicable, changes to a member of staff’s role and their work environment may be made for an appropriate period of time. These may include:

- Diverting phone calls and email messages
- Flexibility around working hours
- Removing the member of staff from a customer facing role
- Alerting security with the member of staff’s permission

Colleagues experiencing domestic abuse may require more time off from work or alteration to their working hours for reasons connected to managing the abuse. Managers should be flexible in response to requests for annual leave and flexi-time.

Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Acts of verbal or physical abusive behaviour can be considered as gross misconduct which will be dealt with in accordance with the University’s Disciplinary Procedure. Colleagues should also be aware their conduct outside of work could lead to disciplinary action. In both instances, this could impact on continuing employment with the University.

Where both parties work for the University, Human Resources should be consulted on appropriate action including any adjustments that can be taken to reduce the risk of incidents taking place at work. If any incident of domestic abuse takes place during the course of working on campus, the University will take appropriate steps against any perpetrator, which can include disciplinary action and which may consequently impact on the continuing employment with University.

Confidentiality

Colleagues can be assured that any disclosures of domestic abuse will be treated as confidential and the University will comply with data protection requirements. However, there are certain circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured such as if there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, or where action needs to be taken to protect the safety of our colleagues.

Support Available

If you are experiencing domestic abuse or you are supporting someone experiencing domestic abuse, there are a number of resources available to support you.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger:
• Please call 999 and ask for the police. If speaking would put you or somebody else in danger, you can make a silent call—use the Silent Solution system and call 999 and then press 55 when prompted.

Sources of support if you are not in immediate danger:

The Ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) codeword scheme has been developed to allow individuals who are subject to domestic abuse to access support from the safety of their local pharmacy. If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need immediate help, ask for ‘ANI’ in a participating pharmacy. If a pharmacy has the ‘Ask for ANI’ logo on display, it means they’re ready to help. They will offer you a private space, provide a phone and ask if you need support from the police or other domestic abuse support services.

Bright Sky is an app and website for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or who is worried about someone. It is focused on how to spot signs of domestic abuse, how to support someone and ways to find help.

Galop UK—support for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse

Karma Nirvana provide support to individuals who experience or have experienced honour-based abuse and forced marriage and have a confidential freephone support helpline open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (0800 5999 247)

Mankind Initiative – advice and support for men suffering domestic abuse

Men's advice line is a confidential helpline (0808 801 0327) for men experiencing domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members).

National Stalking Helpline provide stalking advice and help, an online tool offering information on services locally, the law as well as tips on how to gather evidence.

Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership provide advice and support, can provide safe accommodation and has a 24 hour helpline (0800 0527 222)

The None in Three Centre here at the University has a Help and Support page which lists many other sources of support including both national and regional organisations.

Rape Crisis provides online emotional support, information and self-help tools.
Refuge provide advice and support on their website, and have a freephone 24 hour domestic abuse helpline (0808 2000 247)

Respect - support for men suffering domestic abuse and also help for perpetrators of abuse

Rights of Women – provide legal advice for women

Safe Space – UK SAYS NO MORE is working with Boots UK, Morrisons, Superdrug and Well pharmacies, TSB Banks and independent pharmacies across the UK to provide Safe Spaces in their consultation rooms to provide safe spaces for people experiencing domestic abuse.

Surviving Economic Abuse – support for people whose finances are at risk from their partners in any way

Women’s Aid is a national charity providing frontline domestic abuse services, supporting women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

WomenCentre - provides wide-ranging services include emotional and practical support on issues such as debt, benefits, mental or physical health, domestic violence, counselling, training and development and much more. Centres can be found in Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Halifax and in the community.

If you are concerned that you may commit abuse:

- You can call the RESPECT phoneline (0808 8024040) and a friendly Helpline Advisor will listen to you without judgement and give you honest advice.

To report incidents of domestic abuse:

- To report an incidence of domestic abuse, you can use this online form to report to West Yorkshire Police.

You can also report incidents at your local police station or you can contact CrimeStoppers online or on the phone by calling 0800 555 111 anonymously.