

## Domestic Abuse Policy

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LIVERPOOL  
HOPE  
UNIVERSITY

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# DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY (for Staff)

## **Introduction**

Liverpool Hope University opposes domestic abuse in all its forms. Such a stance must be followed by clear action and hence we have developed a robust policy as part of our commitment to support our employees' health and wellbeing at work as it is specifically related to domestic abuse. It covers the internal and external support available to employees experiencing domestic violence or other forms of abuse, including special leave provisions and signposting to external sources of advice and help. We recognise that our employees may be amongst those affected by domestic abuse in a number of ways: for example as a survivor of domestic abuse, as an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse or as someone who has been impacted upon by domestic abuse in another way.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. This is a fundamental stance. Liverpool Hope has a 'zero tolerance' position on domestic abuse and is committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support and practical assistance. Abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator and misconduct both inside and outside the workplace will be taken extremely seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

## **Aim of policy**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support employees experiencing domestic abuse;
- enable employees experiencing domestic abuse to remain productive and at work;
- aid managers seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse;
- assist the colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse; and
- reinforce our corporate social responsibility objectives by demonstrating that we value, and are prepared to support, staff during difficult periods.

## **What is domestic abuse?**

Domestic abuse includes physical and sexual violence, verbal abuse, coercion and threats, emotional abuse, stalking and financial control between intimate partners and family members, including adolescent to parent abuse. When carried out through social media, email, text or phone messages it is known as technology-mediated violence and abuse.

How domestic abuse manifests itself in the case of a particular individual will vary significantly. It may include one or more type of abuse and may be influenced by such things as gender inequality, racism, homophobia and health fears. For those experiencing multiple

forms of discrimination including Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women, disabled people and LGBT+ victims/survivors, the barriers to safety are multiplied.

### **Identification of the problem**

Whilst it is for the individual themselves to recognise they are a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim. These may include:

- 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 essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Managers who support staff in such matters should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance is available.

Liverpool Hope respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst Liverpool Hope strongly encourages victims of domestic abuse to disclose the abuse for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to, and will respect an employee's right to confidentiality on this matter (subject to the exception of where there is reported abuse of a minor, vulnerable adult or there is serious risk of life-threatening harm).

### **Confidentiality and right to privacy**

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff unless permission to do so is given.

There are, however, some circumstances in which complete confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur, for example, when there are safeguarding concerns relating to a minor, a vulnerable adult or there is serious risk of life-threatening harm. In these situations, there is a legal responsibility to pass the information on to an appropriate external professional. Any such disclosure will be discussed with the member of staff, who can be assured of sensitivity and full support.

Improper disclosure of information, i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff, will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

## INTERNAL SUPPORT

### Support for individuals

Liverpool Hope recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and will provide as much reasonable and appropriate ongoing support as possible for employees who disclose abuse. The University will work cooperatively with relevant stakeholders (for example the police, social workers and support groups) to help staff experiencing domestic abuse.

The University will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

Managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer-facing role.
- Temporary redeployment or relocation if appropriate and viable
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Using other existing policies, including flexible working.
- Offer access to counselling, and publicise the availability of this support regularly through the intranet and ongoing health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Access to courses developed to support female survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme or assertiveness training.

Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage (subject to the exceptions relating to minors, vulnerable adults or serious risk of harm noted above).

Other existing provisions (including occupational health, independent counselling service, etc) will also be signposted to staff as a means of support.

### **Individual Risk Assessment**

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, Liverpool Hope will encourage its employees to contact a specialist support agency who can undertake a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

Liverpool Hope will work with the employee and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent other than where there is risk to a minor or vulnerable adult or serious risk of life-threatening harm to the colleague) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety at work and at home as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues.

Separate from the above where an employee advises that they are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse, an appropriate work risk assessment will be documented and any mitigating actions identified/implemented.

### **Disclosure of abuse**

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to, or seek support from their manager, a union representative, or colleague. They can do so in the knowledge that the issue is governed by this policy.

Employees can also contact their HR Manager. HR Managers will also provide guidance to managers, colleagues and union representatives who are approached by staff who are being abused.

### **Your line manager's role**

Line managers have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic violence to seek help. The role of your line manager is to:

- identify employees experiencing difficulties as a result of domestic violence (for example, using regular performance appraisal, or by fostering an open management culture that enables team members to disclose sensitive issues);
- provide support in the first instance, including specific advice on the options available, but also recognise the limitations of their role (referring to professional counsellors or experts where necessary);
- protect confidentiality in all instances (subject to legal requirements to disclose as noted above);
- refer individuals to the appropriate internal or external source of help and support, for example a HR Manager or external agency;
- ensure that the safety of all employees in the team is protected; and

- enable the affected employee to remain productive and at work during a difficult period in their domestic life, for example by using the organisation's special leave policies and procedures.

### **Attendance**

We recognise that those experiencing domestic violence may need to be absent from work at times and will assist them by using our special leave policies.

Individual absences can be discussed and agreed between the employee and the line manager, with HR support where appropriate.

### **Security and safety**

We seek to protect the safety and security of all employees at work, including those affected by domestic violence and their colleagues.

Employees need to tell us that they are at risk from domestic violence in order to receive this protection and we will seek to enable employees to disclose such facts by fostering a supportive and open management culture.

When an individual experiences domestic violence and we are providing support, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

## EXTERNAL SUPPORT - LOCAL

Worst Kept Secret helpline (Merseyside)

0800 028 3398

Free confidential helpline that doesn't show up on landline bills.

Wirral Domestic Abuse Services and Family Safety Unit

0151 666 4914

Information on how victims of domestic abuse can get help, plus details of other Wirral-based agencies and charities that can provide support.

Sefton Women's and Children's Aid (SWACA)

0151 922 8606

Gives free practical and emotional support to help women, young people and children survive the impact of domestic violence and abuse

Knowsley Hate Incident and Domestic Abuse helpline

0800 953 4433

Helpline that provides advice and information to those who have suffered a hate incident or domestic abuse.

St Helens Independent Domestic Violence Advocate

01744 743 200

Advocates provide free and confidential support for both male and female victims of domestic abuse.

Forced Marriage Unit

0207 008 0151

Contact the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) if you're trying to stop a forced marriage or you need help leaving a marriage you've been forced into.

## EXTERNAL SUPPORT - NATIONAL

Domestic Violence Assist

Specialises in assistance to obtain emergency injunctions from being further abused.

Phone: 0800 195 8699

National Centre for Domestic Violence

Specialises in assistance to get emergency injunctions from being further abused.

Phone: 0800 970 2070



Women's Aid Domestic Violence Helpline

Free 24-hour national helpline run by Women's Aid and Refuge.

Phone: 0808 2000 247

Phone: 0808 808 8141

Men's Advice Line

Confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse.

Phone: 0808 801 0327

Respect

Practical information and advice on domestic violence for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends

Phone: 0808 8024040

National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline

Emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people.

Phone: 0800 999 5428

National Stalking Helpline

Guidance on the law, how to report stalking, gathering evidence, staying safe and reducing the risk.

Phone: 0808 802 0300

Victim Support

Free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family and friends.

Phone: 0808 1689 111

Government advice and guidance for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

**Review**

The University recognises that this document may not cover every eventuality, and that related policies/legislation/processes and sources of advice/assistance will change. We will update the guidance regularly to help ensure it remains relevant and useful, and welcome any feedback.