

Domestic Violence Policy

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Reading
Borough Council
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Document History	
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Version 1.1	Final version agreed with Joint Trade Unions on DATE and approved by Personnel Committee on DATE.

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1 Introduction

We have developed this policy as part of our commitment to support our workforce's health and wellbeing at work.

It covers the internal and external support available to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, including appointing a member of staff as a nominated point of contact, special leave provisions and signposting to external sources of advice and help.

This policy applies to anyone working for us. This includes employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices.

2 The aim of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support individuals experiencing domestic abuse;
- enable individuals experiencing domestic abuse to remain productive and at work;
- aid managers seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse;
- assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse; and
- reinforce our objectives as a socially responsible organisation by demonstrating that we value, and are prepared to support, staff during difficult periods.

3 What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is abusive behaviour by one person to another, where they are both aged 16 or over and they are personally connected. The abusive behaviour can be a single incident or a course of conduct.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse; or
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

4 Internal support

To support individuals who experience domestic abuse, we will:

- nominate an appointed Senior HR Advisor to act as a confidential first point of contact;
- offer access to counselling, and publicise the availability of this support regularly through ongoing health and wellbeing initiatives;
- offer access to counselling and other support to individuals perpetrating domestic abuse who seek help from us; and
- undertake to raise workplace awareness of domestic abuse issues through a programme of regular information initiatives.

5 External support

We will signpost external sources of help and support, including information on:

- [Respect](#), which provides practical information and advice on domestic abuse for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends;
- [the National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#), which provides advice for those experiencing domestic abuse;
- Business in the Community's [domestic abuse toolkit](#) which helps ensures all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse; and
- [government advice and guidance](#) for those who are experiencing, or feel at risk of, domestic abuse.

6 Your line managers' role

Line managers have a crucial role to play in enabling individuals experiencing domestic abuse to seek help. We provide training for all managers in handling sensitive issues (including domestic abuse), raising awareness of domestic abuse in teams, and operating the procedures for handling instances of domestic abuse.

Your role as a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse by making it clear to employees that they will be supported, making them aware of the workplace policy, outlining what help is available, and signposting them to professional sources of support.

The role of your line manager is to:

- identify individuals experiencing difficulties as a result of domestic abuse (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); further information of support organisations can be found at the end of this policy.
- protect confidentiality in all instances and should not be discussed with anyone unless consent has been given (excepting the requirements of child protection);
- refer individuals to the appropriate internal or external source of help and support, for example the organisation's confidential point of contact or external agency;
- ensure that the safety of all individuals in the team is protected; and
- enable the affected individual 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.

7 Attendance

We recognise that those experiencing domestic abuse 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 individual and the line manager, with HR support where appropriate.

Absences will not be counted towards sickness reviews.

8 Security and safety

We will protect the safety and security of all staff at work, including those affected by domestic abuse and their colleagues.

Individuals need to tell us that they are at risk from domestic abuse to receive this protection and we will seek to enable them to make this disclosure by fostering a supportive and open management culture.

9 Should the victim/survivor and the perpetrator both work at Reading Borough Council

In cases where both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, Reading Borough Council will take appropriate action.

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/survivor. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or offices.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating domestic abuse in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations appropriate support should be given.

10 Data protection

When an individual experiences domestic abuse 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.

11 Resources

If you are concerned for your own or someone else’s immediate safety, ring the police on 999.

RESPECT	Working to end Domestic Abuse. We lead on the development of safe, effective work with perpetrators, male victims and young people using violence in their close relationships	www.Respect.Net.UK
REFUGE	Are you experiencing Domestic Abuse? You are NOT alone. The Freephone 24-hour Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 2000 247	www.Nationaladhelpline.org.uk
GOV.UK	Information to find help and advice if you or someone you know is a victim of Domestic Abuse	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help
WOMEN’S AID	I need help – information and support on Domestic Abuse. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chat • Email • Survivors Handbook • Forum 	I need help - information and support on domestic abuse (womensaid.org.uk)
GALOP	Our team has decades of experience in supporting	Galop - the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity

	LGBT+ people who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, so-called conversion therapies, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse.	
RESPECT – MEN’S HELPLINE	The helpline for male victims of Domestic Abuse <u>Talk it over</u> <u>Freephone 24-hour 0808 8010327</u>	Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men Men's Advice Line UK (mensadvice.org.uk)
The Prince’s Responsible Business Network	Domestic Abuse tool kit for employer	Domestic Abuse: a toolkit for employers - Guide For Employers (bitc.org.uk)
<p>You can also contact:</p> <p>0808 802 1414 – Northern Ireland Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline 0800 027 1234 – Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline 0808 801 0800 – Live Fear Free (Wales)</p>		