



Domestic Abuse Workforce Policy

Version:	V1.00
Name of originator/ author:	, HR Policy & ER Manager
Responsible management group:	HR Working Group
Directorate/team accountable:	Human Resources

Policy:	
Approved by:	Joint Partnership Policy Forum (JPPF)
Date approved:	
Fit for purpose according to:	HR Working Group and Safeguarding Sub Group
Date approved:	25 th August 2020

Date issued:	26 th August 2020
Date next review due:	25 th August 2023
Target audience:	All Staff
Replaces (version number):	New Policy

Equality Analysis Record	
Approved EA included	Dated:
Quality Impact Assessment	
Approved QIA included	
Dated:	
Data Privacy Impact Assessment	
Approved DPIA included	DELETE if not applicable
Dated:	

Document Control

Formal approval:

Final approval by:	Joint Partnership Policy Forum	
Version No. V0.00	Final / Draft	Date: dd/mm/yyyy
Responsible Management Group approval by:	HR Working Group and Safeguarding Sub Group	
Version No. V0.00	Final / Draft	Date: dd/mm/yyyy

Review/comments:

Person/ Committee	Comments	Version	Date

Circulation:

Records Management Database upload	Date: [to be added by Corporate Governance Team]
Internal Stakeholders	
External Stakeholders	

Review Due by responsible Management Group:

Period	Every three years or sooner if new legislation, codes of practice or national standards are introduced	Date:
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Record Information:

Security Access/ Sensitivity	[select either Official (Public Domain) or Official – Sensitive for document(s) which should not be made available to the public routinely]
Where Held	Corporate Records Register
Disposal Method and Date	In line with national guidelines

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1 Statement of Aims and Objectives

- 1.1. Everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form. South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (The Trust) strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that abuse against people is unacceptable and that such abuse will not be condoned.
- 1.2. The Trust is committed to responding sensitively and effectively to staff that require help and support and to challenging negative attitudes, as outlined within the Bullying & Harassment (Dignity at Work) Policy.
- 1.3. The Trust recognises that domestic abuse is not always obvious or easy to spot. By providing guidance to all Trust staff and managers in supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse, it is hoped that this will create safe opportunities and environments for disclosure.
- 1.4. This policy aims to:-
 - Raise awareness as to the nature and signs of domestic abuse and the signs of potential abuse.
 - Remove misconceptions and fears of stigmatisation.
 - Support employees requesting help in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse.
 - Ensure that as domestic abuse is disclosed the immediate action is to protect the victim (and children, if living in the same household) and to prevent further abuse from taking place.
 - Ensure that disclosure from staff is treated sympathetically and confidentially.
- 1.5. This policy demonstrates the Trust's commitment to responding with sensitivity to staff who need help and support and in taking action against perpetrators of domestic violence.

2 Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all staff directly employed by the Trust. In addition, it applies to Bank or agency and the staff of contractors. It also applies to volunteers.
- 2.2. This protocol does not cover domestic abuse experienced by service users. Please refer to the Managing Safeguarding Allegations Policy which can be found on the Trust's Intranet.
- 2.3. Where appropriate, this policy should be used in conjunction with related Trust policies such as Flexible Working, Managing Health and Attendance and Special Leave. Additionally, this

policy should be taken account when considering action under the disciplinary or capability policies.

3 Definitions

Domestic Abuse – Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, from intimate partners or family members regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, religion or any form of disability.

Domestic abuse can be a single incident or a series of incidents and can include, but is not limited to, abuse that is:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

The definition includes ‘honour’ based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

More detailed definitions can be found in Appendix A.

- **Controlling behaviour** - is 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, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Coercive behaviour** - is 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.

4 Principles

- 4.1. The Trust respects an employee’s right to confidentiality and recognises that employees experiencing domestic abuse normally have the right to confidentiality. However, in certain circumstances, information may need to be shared with other appropriate persons/agencies. As such, disclosures relating to domestic abuse should be treated confidentially unless:

- There are concerns about safeguarding children.

- There are concerns about safeguarding a vulnerable adult(s).
- There is a direct threat to the health or safety of other employees.
- The employee agrees to sharing information as part of the support plan.

- 4.2. The Trust will not discriminate against anyone who has been or is experiencing domestic abuse, in terms of their existing employment or career development.
- 4.3. The Trust is aware that domestic abuse survivors may have performance problems such as chronic absenteeism or lower productivity as a result of domestic abuse.
- 4.4. When addressing performance and safety issues, the Trust will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation and / or safety problems.
- 4.5. The Trust will make every effort to assist and make support available to employees involved in or experiencing domestic abuse.
- 4.6. The Trust has a duty to ensure the safety of its employees. The Trust will actively provide support to employees to minimise the risk to their safety while at work, if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 4.7. This policy is intended to be safety focussed and supportive rather than punitive, with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change,
- 4.8. The Trust will provide support through our line managers, Human Resources, Safeguarding, Occupational Health, Wellbeing Hub, Chaplains and signposting to external agencies if appropriate.
- 4.9. Domestic abuse is always the responsibility of the perpetrator. The Trust views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the Disciplinary Policy.
- 4.10. The Trust will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence seriously, regardless of whether the incident(s) take place in or outside of work, and will investigate under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy which may result in disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal.

5 Responsibilities

5.1. Employees

- 5.1.1. Every employee has a personal responsibility to comply with this policy and support its implementation.
- 5.1.2. Ensure their behaviour at work reflects the aims and values of the Trust and that they follow this policy in maintaining confidentiality and privacy for colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.1.3. The Trust encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence.

5.2. **Line Managers**

- 5.2.1. To ensure staff are aware of this policy and any associated procedures.
- 5.2.2. To ensure that staff complete mandatory safeguarding training.
- 5.2.3. It is important to be clear that the line manager's role is not to advise employees on dealing with domestic abuse but to:
 - Take the employee's concerns very seriously, taking time to listen to them, understanding what they tell you, and ensuring a sensitive non-judgemental approach.
 - Ensure that confidentiality is respected as far as possible.
 - Understanding that an employee may wish to involve a third party, such as a colleague or trade union representative.
 - Discuss the specific steps that can be taken to help the individual stay safe in the workplace.
 - Ensure the individual is aware of the support available and explore these options with the employee.
 - Respect the choices and decisions of the staff member. It must be recognised that the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process.
 - Sign-post the employee to seek advice or other relevant and specialist support.
 - Where necessary, managers should contact local specialist domestic abuse outreach services for advice and guidance.
 - Be aware that there may be additional issues facing the employee because of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, religion, race or disability.

5.2.4. The range of support that the line manager may provide will depend on the individual circumstances of the case and it is important that they take advice from Human Resources and the Safeguarding team.

5.2.5. Managers should keep a written note of discussions as they may be required as evidence.

5.3. Human Resources

5.3.1. Provide guidance, support and coaching to managers, including:-

- Advising managers on the application of this policy.
- Ensuring the effective implementation of this protocol.
- Reviewing and amending the policy in consultation with appropriate groups.

6 Possible Signs of Domestic Abuse

6.1. Survivors of domestic abuse are often reluctant to discuss their situation with their employer or work colleagues. However, there are some signs which might indicate that they are experiencing such problems. It is important to remember that not all survivors behave in the same way, and the following will not be applicable in all cases. Similarly, it is important to note that staff who demonstrate some of the characteristics noted will not always be victims of domestic abuse.

6.2. Whilst it is for the individual themselves to recognise they are a victim of domestic abuse, special attention may be warranted when for example behaviour changes significantly or if uncharacteristic behaviour is demonstrated for a sustained period.

6.3. Workplace performance

- Absenteeism without proper explanation.
- Frequent arriving at work late or needing to leave early.
- Uncharacteristic displays of anxiety, depression, distraction or problems with concentration.
- Change in the quality of work with no apparent explanation.
- Receiving upsetting telephone calls, text messages, emails etc. or being the victim of vandalism or threats.
- Obsession with time.
- Significant changes in an employee's dress sense for example excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn.
- Increase in hours worked for no apparent reason.

6.4. **Physical signs**

- Repeated burns, bruises or other injuries (often with attempts to hide these).
- Injuries in areas of the body consistent with falls, walking into doors or other explanations given.
- Injuries to the chest, breast and abdomen (women are more likely to be injured in these areas and they are common injuries in pregnancy).
- Injuries to the face, head or neck.
- Evidence of sexual abuse, or frequent gynaecological problems in women.
- Frequent unexplained visits to the Doctor or explained with vague symptoms.
- Frequent use of pain medication.
- Significant weight loss or gain.

6.5. **Emotional Signs**

- Panic attacks, anxiety and / or depression.
- Exhibiting severe stress reactions.
- Emotional exhaustion, lack of emotional control.
- Impaired thinking.
- Decreased concentration / attention span.
- Eruptions of aggressiveness/ anger out of control.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Frequent use of minor tranquilisers.
- Preoccupied with or distracted by the welfare of their children.

6.6. **Behavioural Signs**

- Displays of fright.
- Elevated startled response.
- Withdrawal or personal isolation.
- Low self-esteem.

6.7. **Other**

- Secretive about home life.
- Partner may attempt to limit their work or social contacts.
- Partner may ridicule them in public.
- Partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life.

6.8. This is not an exhaustive checklist. Whilst the above characteristics can be common in those that experience domestic abuse, it is also possible that survivors may demonstrate minimal or occasionally no disruption to their usual behaviour.

6.9. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, and in all kinds of relationships – heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. People suffer domestic violence regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, gender, sexuality or lifestyle. The abuse can begin at any time – in new relationships or after many years spent together. Pregnancy can

be a trigger for domestic abuse, and existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after birth. It is also important to remember that whilst there are similarities in responses, individuals may need differing specialised support.

- 6.10. Where a member of staff suspects that domestic abuse may be affecting a colleague, the provision in this policy should be followed.

7 Providing Support for Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse

- 7.1. Depending on individual circumstances, support options may include:

- Paid/unpaid leave
- Work schedule adjustments
- Alternative Duties
- Arranging flexible work hours so the employee can seek protection, go to court, look for new housing, enter counselling, arrange childcare, etc.
- Workplace relocation (if available)
- Changes to specific duties
- Referral to the Wellbeing Hub
- Assist with safety planning, discussing the specific steps that can be taken to help an individual stay safe in the workplace, for example changing a telephone number, blocking emails, safe access to / from car parks or public transport
- Referral to Occupational Health
- Alternative methods of salary payment if the abusing partner has access to bank accounts
- Supporting individuals to seek counselling
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace.

- 7.2. The employee can choose to be accompanied at all discussions by either a work colleague or a member of a recognised trade union, if required.

8. If the Victim and the Perpetrator Work in the Trust

- 8.1. In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the Trust, action taken will depend on individual circumstances but may include:

- considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse.
- ensuring that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace.
- minimising potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim.

- change of duties for one or both employees.
- withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or work premises.

9 Employees as Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

- 9.1. Indirect disclosure of perpetrating domestic violence may come to light as a result of:
- A direct allegation to the employer from the victim.
 - An allegation from a third party e.g. an employee suspects or has witnessed another employee abusing their partner.
 - Notification by the police or through a DBS check.
 - The employee needing to take time off to attend court.
- 9.2. Some may identify their abusive behaviour directly and ask for help to deal with their abuse.
- 9.3. Domestic violence is a serious issue and all staff members involved have a role in providing responses which hold perpetrators responsible. How the Trust responds to a perpetrator and any disclosures could affect the extent to which they accept responsibility for their behaviour and, therefore, the need to change. 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.
- 9.4. Engaging with perpetrators of abuse in a positive, respectful way does not mean excusing the abuse. It may also be appropriate to support an employee who is seeking help to address their behaviour, through the Trust's Wellbeing provisions.
- 9.5. When you become aware of violent or abusive behaviour on the part of an employee you may have to decide on one or a combination of actions, depending on the nature (seriousness and complexity) of the case, in line with the Trust's Managing Safeguarding Allegations Policy and Disciplinary Policy.
- 9.6. Employees should be aware that misconduct inside and outside of work is viewed seriously – and can lead to disciplinary action being taken and may lead to criminal proceedings.
- 9.7. If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, email etc this will be investigated in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.
- 9.8. If it becomes evident that an employee has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse then this will be treated as a disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

10 Monitoring Compliance

- 10.1. The HR Working Group is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. Human Resources (HR) will monitor the application of the policy and procedure through feedback from staff and managers. Feedback, legislature and changes to terms and conditions will be used to inform and improve policies, as well as provide recommendations for improving working practices. HR will provide relevant reports, based on this data, as required.

11 Audit and Review (evaluating effectiveness)

- 11.1. All policies have their effectiveness audited by the HR Working Group at regular intervals, and initially six months after a new policy is approved and disseminated.
- 11.2. Effectiveness will be reviewed using the tools set out in the Trust's Policy and Procedure for the Development and Management of Trust Policies and Procedures (also known as the Policy on Policies).
- 11.3. This document will be reviewed in its entirety every three years or sooner if new legislation, codes of practice or national standards are introduced, or if feedback from employees indicates that the policy is not working effectively.
- 11.4. All changes made to this policy will go through the governance route for development and approval as set out in the Policy on Policies.

12 Associated Trust Documentation

- Managing Safeguarding Allegations Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Bullying and Harassment (Dignity at Work) Policy
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks and Criminal Convictions Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Managing Health & Attendance Policy
- Lone Worker Policy
- Incident Reporting Policy

13 Financial Checkpoint

To ensure that any financial implications of changes in policy or procedure are considered in advance of document approval, document authors are required to seek approval from the Finance Team before submitting their document for final approval.

This document has been confirmed by Finance to have financial implications and the relevant Trust processes have been followed to ensure adequate funds are available.

15 Equality Analysis

- 15.1. The Trust believes in fairness and equality, and values diversity in its role as both a provider of services and as an employer. The Trust aims to provide accessible services that respect the needs of each individual and exclude no-one. It is committed to comply with the Human Rights Act and to meeting the Equality Act 2010, which identifies the following nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity.
- 15.2. Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty: If a contractor carries out functions of a public nature then for the duration of the contract, the contractor or supplier would itself be considered a public authority and have the duty to comply with the equalities duties when carrying out those functions.