



Holway Park School

Domestic Violence Policy

December 2024

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Domestic abuse is defined as:

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

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.

This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group. (Home Office 2013).

Domestic abuse can go beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse, the destruction of a spouse's or partner's property, their isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, acts of control that regulate their everyday behaviour, deprive them of their means of independence by controlling access to money, personal items, food, transportation, the telephone and internet.

It may also involve threats, intimidation, humiliation and stalking and can include abuse inflicted on, witnessed by or threatened against, children.

- Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, mental or physical ability.
- Once it has started it often becomes more frequent and more severe.
- It can severely affect children, and other members of the household, emotionally and physically.
- Victims are sometimes beaten or harassed by members of their immediate or extended family.
- Domestic abuse is gendered - the majority of perpetrators are men and between 80-95% of those who experience it are women, although it does also occur against men in heterosexual relationships, in same sex relationships and against bisexual and transgender people.
- Domestic abuse is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victim. On average a victim of domestic abuse is assaulted 35 times before they report the matter to the police.

What does this mean for schools?

Schools can provide a safe retreat from problems at home but some children and young people will avoid coming to school to stay home to protect their parent or siblings.

Working Together to Safeguard Children states. Professionals should ask direct questions about domestic violence and be alert to the signs that a child or mother may be experiencing domestic violence.

The definition of emotional harm recognises that children and young people are affected not only by experiencing violence themselves but also by witnessing harm to others. Threatening, controlling, belittling behaviours are domestic abuse as well as physical harm.

Where domestic abuse is disclosed, school staff must follow Safeguarding Procedure.

- Don't question or interrogate the young person. This is the role of the police or social services.
- Offer reassurance and explain what will happen next.
- Write down what has been said, what you have seen and what you may already know and share this promptly with your school Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Date and sign all records.
- DSL to consider immediate risk of harm and, as appropriate, contact or refer to First Response, contact non-abusing parent or carer if safe to do so, or police or DV contact numbers

Children's Services:

If you are concerned or know that a child is witnessing domestic abuse you can:

- Ring a health professional.
- Discuss your concerns with the school DSL
- Childline 0800 1111
- NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

What should schools do?

- Respond sensitively
- Provide opportunity for counselling, mentoring, contact with outside agencies for the child or young person.
- Offer understanding and support with home reading, curriculum, children being upset.
- Offer support to the non-abusing parent, including safety planning if it is possible the perpetrator may visit or contact school.
- Be aware of contact orders, injunctions, bail conditions, exclusion orders etc. especially when they include the school.
- Not disclose a refuge address keeping only the Post Office Box address on file (Head/DSL may know the actual refuge address)
- Consider transport arrangements if a child is in a temporary address to try to ensure he or she maintains their school place. Consider whether it is safe for the child to continue at their current school.

Identification of the problem at work

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 Head or colleagues.
- 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 or where victims prefer to be at work rather than at home.

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

Disclosure of abuse

Where staff experiencing domestic abuse choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a line manager or colleague, line managers will not counsel victims, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, the school will encourage its employee to contact a specialist support agency who can undertake a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment), and honour based violence risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

The School will respond sympathetically, confidentially to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse.

Where an employee does not want to discuss their situation with their immediate line manager, they can discuss this in confidence with 'Care First' service.

Confidentiality and right to privacy

The School respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst the School strongly encourages victims of domestic abuse to disclose what they may be experiencing 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.

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 without their permission.

Where consent is not provided but Headteacher want advice they can contact HR, they can do so without identifying the employee.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or adults at risk or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees. In circumstances where the school must breach confidentiality it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, it will discuss with the employee why it is doing so, and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. 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.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. Whilst any periods of absence will need to be recorded, it will not be necessary to record the reason for the absence.

In situations where staff, who have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse, find certain aspects of their work distressing, the concerns should be discussed with the respective manager with a view to exploring ways in which their concerns are addressed and the impact minimised.

Leaders will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage and should avoid being judgemental. 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. Questions about domestic abuse from leaders should be asked sensitively so that the employee can feel safe. The employee may feel ashamed, confused, frightened and even blame themselves. It is important not to deter them from seeking the help they need.

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