

## Staff Affected By Domestic Abuse – Guidance For Managers

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<b>Author/Lead Job Title</b>	Sally Bainbridge, Specialist Safeguarding Practitioner
<b>Director's Name Date</b>	Hilary Gledhill April 2021
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**VALIDITY – Guidance documents should be accessed via the Trust intranet to ensure the current version is used.**

### CHANGE RECORD

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1.0	August 2024	<i>Guideline taken from previous document (of the same name) which hadn't been through Policy Management but was approved at the Quality and Patient Safety Group (QPAS) on 14 April 2021. Previous document reviewed and transposed in to correct Trust template. Approved at Safeguarding Learning and Development Forum (16 August 2022). Formatted and uploaded to intranet on 15 August 2024.</i>

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## 1. FOREWORD

These guidelines have been developed for Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust staff to complement the Trust Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy in supporting staff affected by domestic abuse.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This guidance has been introduced to support managers to help and support employees who they are aware of, or suspect are experiencing domestic abuse. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Domestic Violence & Abuse Policy.

Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust is a White Ribbon accredited organisation, this involves our work to raise awareness around domestic abuse not just for those who access our services but to ensure that employees of HTNFT feel fully supported around any experiences they may be having.

All employees who experience abuse should be supported and it is important to remain non-judgemental to those who are experiencing domestic abuse and seeking support.

It is essential that employers and those in line management positions are knowledgeable about domestic abuse as they are ideally placed to offer a lifeline to those experiencing it.

It is important that every employee who is experiencing domestic abuse knows that they can access information, support and if required assistance and that HTNFT will respond appropriately. Employees are also encouraged to raise concerns if it is suspected that colleagues are experiencing domestic abuse.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

Domestic Abuse - On the 29th April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Bill was given Royal Assent and has been signed into law to form the Domestic Abuse Act (2021). The Domestic Abuse Act creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse as: "Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, 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, 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. From 29 December 2015, coercion and control in a relationship is a criminal offence, carrying a maximum sentence of five years in prison (Serious Crime Act 2015).

## 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROFESSIONALS

### Providing Information and Raising Awareness

It is important to promote the understanding that everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form.

All Trust areas should be working to ensure information around White Ribbon status and local support services for domestic abuse are accessible to staff working across the Trust.

Domestic Abuse Champions have been trained across the Trust to ensure that there is a consistent understanding around the complex topic of coercive control, the ability to recognise indicators of domestic abuse and how to enquire safely.

### **Managers**

All managers should take steps to ensure they are familiar with the Trust Domestic Abuse Policy and these guidelines so that they are in a position to be able to respond appropriately to employees and volunteers of Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust.

### **All staff**

All employees including students and volunteers of Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust should feel confident to refer to this guidance document should they require support around domestic abuse.

## **5. SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES**

There are four key steps to follow and consider carefully when supporting an employee who is experiencing domestic abuse.

### **5.1 RECOGNISE THE PROBLEM**

HTNFT recognises that domestic abuse is a widespread problem that has an impact on victims, children, and perpetrators lives. It can take many forms: it is not just physical abuse; it can also be economic, emotional, and psychological. Recent statistics state that one in seven employees within health and social care will experience domestic abuse.

The impact of domestic abuse is often multi-faceted, with statistics indicating that 66% of people affected by domestic abuse will experience post traumatic stress disorder. Changes in behaviour may include presentations of anxiety, being distracted or becoming depressed. GP attendance for sleep medication and anti-depressants is strongly associated to domestic abuse, those experiencing such distress are also more likely to use alcohol/substances in order to cope with the impact of their lived experiences.

There may be subtle or significant changes such as isolating from work colleagues, being anxious about leaving work on time, leaving children/pets at home or being secretive about home life. There may be anxieties of changes to work arrangements such as a return to the office or change of work base.

Physical indicators may include but is not limited to visible bruising, single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations, repeated gynaecological conditions, heavy make up or change of clothing that does not suit the environment in order to hide injuries.

Domestic abuse is the highest cause of workplace absenteeism. The complexity of coercive control tactics can have a devastating impact upon those attempting to maintain day to day work activities. This may involve but is not limited to:

- Causing delay in workplace attendance, this may impact upon colleagues shift handovers and work allocation
- Causing absenteeism due to physical or emotional impact of domestic abuse

- Causing disruption to the working day due to continued harassment through text messaging and telephone calls
- Increase in errors during the working day due to constant anxiety, fear, lack of sleep
- Malicious communications made to line managers and or colleagues

Whilst all managers must be ready to respond to direct requests for help from employees who are victims of domestic abuse, it is more likely that a manager will start to become aware of the situation because of a change in the employee's behaviour for example attendance at work is unpredictable or the standard of work reduces.

It is important to follow up issues of concern when an employee is acting out of character. Managers know the usual behaviour and personalities of their team and must explore concerns, adopting a sensitive approach to understand the reason for a change in behaviour at work.

Identifying that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse at an early stage can help ensure appropriate information and support is provided. This can then enable the employee to explore their options more effectively. You may wish to seek support from HTNFT Safeguarding Team.

## **5.2 RESPOND**

It is important that you believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse, it is not appropriate to ask for proof. You must take a sensitive and non-judgemental approach when supporting to an employee who is a victim of domestic abuse. This should include:

- Taking the employee seriously, taking time to listen to them
- Ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in privacy and that you respect their confidentiality as far as possible
- Understanding that the employee may not wish to approach you and may prefer to involve a third party such as a Domestic Abuse Practitioner, colleague, Human Resources Officer, or Trade Union representative, or seek support outside of the workplace. It may be appropriate to offer the option of speaking to a third party who will be able to advise the employee and/or their line manager on what measures can be taken.

If an employee does not wish to speak to you, this should be respected, however they should be advised of the difficulties which may arise if you are not aware of the relevant facts and circumstances (for instance if there is a potential Health and Safety issue or if other action is being taken on performance or absence monitoring).

Being aware that there may be additional issues faced by the employee because of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability etc.

Being non-judgemental as the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try various options during this process. Research has shown that it can take a long time to break free of an abusive relationship. It should not be assumed therefore, that because an individual returns or stays in an abusive relationship that the abuse was not severe or did not take place. Surveys have shown that on average a victim will suffer serious assault and abuse around 35 times before it is reported to the police;

Being aware of what support is available and exploring these options with the employee. However, if the employee does not want to contact other agencies, their wishes must be respected.

### **5.3 PROVIDE SUPPORT**

The responsibilities of employers, employees and others for the Health and Safety of persons at work are defined by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Managers may have to take into account whether practical measures are operationally appropriate. However, ensuring that employees are safe should be of primary consideration throughout this process.

These issues could be addressed by considering/improving the security measures, adapting working hours, offering a change of work location, consideration given to changing the employee's work number, sharing information with colleagues and advice about how to respond should the perpetrator call or visit the workplace. The measures you discuss and put in place must be in consultation and in agreement with the employee.

#### **Special Leave and Other Supportive measures**

Managers may receive requests for time off to arrange appointments during the normal working hours. These requests should be treated sympathetically in line with the policy. These appointments may include: -

- Appointments with local domestic abuse services
- Arranging re-housing
- Making alternative childcare arrangements
- Appointments with the police

Managers should also explore other measures supportively, such as temporary reduced or alternative working hours. Please refer to the [Flexible Working Policy](#) for further advice and guidance.

Where appropriate the manager, with the consent of the employee, can also make a referral to Occupational Health.

Making sure that the systems for recording employee whereabouts during the days are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the office, consider how risks can be minimised (for example changing duties or allowing another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys). Please refer to [Lone Worker Policy](#).

You will know what is operationally possible within your service/team and it is HTNFT expectation that you consider all reasonable options to support an employee and help them at work.

### **5.4 SPECIALIST SUPPORT**

An essential part of providing support to an employee experiencing domestic abuse is to be aware and have knowledge of specialist support agencies. Providing the contact details of such agencies will enable an employee to seek specialist support. Please refer to Useful Contact numbers at the end of this guidance and if required advice can be sought from the Safeguarding Team.

## 6. WHAT TO DO IF A HUMBER EMPLOYEE IS A PERPETRATOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Employees should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter that can lead to criminal convictions and will not be tolerated by the HTNFT. Conduct outside of work (whether or not it leads to criminal convictions) does not necessarily lead to disciplinary action against an employee. However, in certain cases, conduct outside of work may be in breach of HTNFT [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#) or Code of Conduct e.g. making the employee unsuitable for their type of work, bringing the authority into disrepute; undermining trust and confidence in the employee. In such or similar circumstances the HTNFT should follow the [Managing Concerns Against Individuals in a Position of Trust Policy](#).

The facts will then be considered, and a decision taken as to whether the conduct falls within the HTNFT disciplinary procedures. Factors to consider include:

- The nature of the conduct and the nature of the work to be done
- The extent to which it involves contact with other employees or the general public

In addition, such conduct may make certain job duties inappropriate and justify consideration for redeployment. For example, it may not be appropriate for a perpetrator of domestic abuse to provide services to vulnerable people and children and a change of duties or a transfer may need to be considered in such circumstances (this will be based on the circumstances of each individual case to determine whether redeployment is appropriate or possible).

Similarly, those who use abusive behaviours towards an employee by their partner and ex-partner who also works for the HTNFT will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Managers will need to refer to the HTNFT [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).

If any of the circumstances set out above are brought to the manager's attention Human Resources advice should be sought before taking action. In addition, managers may also need to consider the possibility of increased risk to the victim of a perpetrator where any employee disciplinary procedure is taking place, further involvement with HTNFT safeguarding team can assist in consideration of additional safeguarding considerations.

Managers also need to develop a sensitive and non-judgemental approach if dealing with employees who may seek their advice and support when admitting to being a perpetrator of domestic abuse. Managers should be aware of what support is available and provide information on the Programmes which perpetrators can self-refer to if they wish to access support (see local support services in appendix 2).

## 7. IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

This guidance will be available for staff to access.

All line managers trade union representatives, human resources and occupational health should aim to attend domestic abuse employment training sessions which are bookable through ESR.

A briefing document will be issued to all Senior Management by a Human Resources representative. Line managers will then be responsible for disseminating the new guidance via team briefs.

## 8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

In developing this guidance, the Trust's screening tool was utilised to determine if a full impact assessment was required. The outcome was that an impact assessment was undertaken, and the results showed a positive impact for children as the guidance supports staff in protecting and promoting the welfare of all children. This guidance is regarded as being equitable to all and as a result of its implementation no individual will suffer from any form of discrimination, inequality, victimisation, harassment or bullying as a result of implementing this guidance.

## 9. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are related to this guidance:

[Bullying and Harassment Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Capability Policy and Procedure.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Stress at Work Policy HR-039.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Special Leave Policy \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Health and Safety Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Managing Sickness Absence Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Flexible Working Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Safeguarding Children Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Safeguarding Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Safeguarding Adults Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Lone Worker Policy F-004.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Managing Concerns Against Individuals in a Position of Trust Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Flexible Working Policy.pdf \(humber.nhs.uk\)](#)



## Appendix 1 – Workplace Safety Planning

Workplace safety planning		Plan
Consideration of change of work base	Yes/No/NA	
Change of work number	Yes/No/NA	
Consider changes to working hours	Yes/No/NA	
Discuss support to attend necessary appointments	Yes/No/NA	
Discuss safety arrangements travelling to and from work	Yes/No/NA	
Safe word agreed for any communication required	Yes/No/NA	
Consider any changes to lone working arrangements	Yes/No/NA	
Discussion of information to be disclosed to colleagues	Yes/No/NA	
Discussion around response to abuser if contact is made to work place	Yes/No/NA	

## Appendix 2 – Sources of Support

Hull Agencies	Telephone Number
Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP)	01482 318759
Domestic Abuse Men's Service (DAP)	01482 613978
Hull Women's Aid	01482 446099
Hull Women's Aid Children and Young People's Services	01482 474133
Preston Road Women's Centre	01482 790310
Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice	0800 144 88 48 <a href="mailto:e-advice@hull-eastridingcab.org.uk">e-advice@hull-eastridingcab.org.uk</a>
Specialist Debt Advice	01482 226 859
Humberside Fire and Rescue	01482 565333

East Riding Agencies	Telephone Number
Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership (DVAP) Supports women, men and children	01482 396330 OOH 01482 393939
Sexual assault referral centre	0330 223 0181 <a href="mailto:casasuite.sarc@nhs.net">casasuite.sarc@nhs.net</a>
East Riding Prevention of Domestic Abuse Services (PODAS)	
Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice	0800 144 88 48 <a href="mailto:e-advice@hull-eastridingcab.org.uk">e-advice@hull-eastridingcab.org.uk</a>
Specialist Debt Advice	01482 226 859
Humberside Fire and Rescue	01482 565333

North Yorkshire	Telephone Number
Independent domestic abuse services (IDAS)	03000 110 110
North Yorkshire Sexual assault referral centre	0330 223 0362 <a href="mailto:bridgehouse.sarc@nhs.net">bridgehouse.sarc@nhs.net</a>
North Yorks Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme	<a href="http://foundationuk.org">+Choices - Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme - Foundation (foundationuk.org)</a>
North Yorkshire Citizens Advice Line	0808 278 7900
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service	01609 788545

National Specialist Agencies	Telephone Number
National 24 Hour Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 200 0247
Gingerbread	0808 802 0925
GALOP (LGBTQ)	0300 999 5428
Respect (helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators)	0808 802 4040 0808 801 0327 (men)
The Samaritans	0845 790 9090
Mens Advice Line	0808 801 0327
National Debtline	0800 138 1111