

Guidelines on dealing with domestic abuse

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1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of these guidelines are to help managers provide appropriate support to staff who are victims or survivors of domestic abuse. These guidelines cover all employees.

1.2 These guidelines complement, but are not restricted by, other equal opportunities and flexible working agreements, including Flexible Working and Flexitime.

2 Principles

2.1 The University is committed to ensure appropriate support and guidance is available for staff who are victims or survivors of domestic abuse.

2.2 The University recognises the impact that domestic abuse can have on the well-being of staff. One-in-four women and one-in-six men have or will suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetimes, and nearly a quarter of all violent crime is domestic violence¹. The support provided under these guidelines, therefore, applies equally to all employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse, whether they are male or female. It may also be relevant to staff affected by domestic abuse perpetrated against someone close to them rather than against them personally.

2.3 These guidelines are part of the University's commitment to family friendly working. They support the University's aim to promote the welfare of individual

¹ Home Office, 2004; Dodd et al., 2004; Dobash and Dobash, 1980; Walby and Allen, 2004

members of staff; to retain valued employees; to improve morale and performance; and to enhance the reputation of the University as an employer of choice.

3 Definition of domestic abuse

3.1 Domestic abuse defined as physical, sexual, mental, verbal or emotional abuse by a partner, ex-partner, family member or extended family member, or person co-habiting.

3.2 Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence including women, men and people in same sex relationships.

4 General measures

4.1 The University will inform staff of the issue and what support is available, using the intranet, staff briefings, inductions and other means. This includes internal support, and local and national external organisations.

4.2 The University will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or work schedules.

4.3 Staff suffering from domestic abuse may report it to a line manager, dignity at work adviser, union representative, HR adviser or colleague. The University will provide information for managers, dignity at work advisers and union representatives on domestic abuse and appropriate responses. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel victims, but will offer information, workplace support, and provide information on other organisations.

5 Individual support

5.1 The University will work to help staff suffering domestic abuse.

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

5.3 Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will take this into account when dealing with unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping.

5.4 Line managers may offer employees suffering from domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexibility 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 or, if they are a fellow employee, redeployment or relocation.

- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Offering assertiveness training courses
- Using other existing policies including Flexible Working and Flexitime.

5.5 Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage.

5.6 Other existing provisions including Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme (Rightcorecare) will also be suggested to staff as a source of help.

5.7 If an employee is being denied access to their finances, arrangements for payment can be altered, so the employee can change the account into which their salary is paid. Arrangement of payment or part payment of salary as open cheque can also be negotiated. The manager should have discussed this with the Payroll Manager and HR prior to confirming this with the employee.

5.8 Arrangement for possible safe storage of important documents/copies on campus can be considered.

5.9 Campus security should be alerted in cases where partners, or other individuals involved, may turn up at the University.

6 Confidentiality and record keeping

6.1 All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse.

6.2 The need for confidentiality generally includes ensuring that an employee's address, telephone number and work location is not identified.

6.3 Information will only be disclosed with the express permission of the individual, unless there are legal requirements to the contrary. Where a risk to children or vulnerable adults is identified, the employer's responsibility for public protection may lead them to notify social services; if this happens, the individual will be informed.

7 Other issues

7.1 If a victim of domestic abuse and their alleged abuser are both employed by the University, incidents at work will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure. If necessary, work arrangements may be reviewed to ensure the safety of the person suffering abuse.

7.2 Abuse of provisions in these guidelines may constitute a serious disciplinary offence, and will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Useful external organisations:

- 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 or email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>
- Survive: 0117 9612999 <http://www.survivedv.org.uk/> offers emergency accommodation outreach support, help and advice for anyone who has experienced domestic abuse.
- Mankind: 01823 334 244 www.mankind.org.uk or email admin@mankindcounselling.org.uk
- Broken Rainbow: 0300 999 5428 www.brokenrainbow.org.uk National Helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people experiencing domestic violence
- Karma Nirvana 0800 5999 247 www.karmanirvana.org.uk/ who offer support in the area of honour crime/forced marriage
- Well Woman 0117 941 3311 Provides health information, counselling and advice
- Employee Assistance Programme 0800 1116 387
<http://eap.rightcorecare.co.uk/>
- Police Domestic Violence Officer: 0845 4567000
- Detailed, up to date list of support agencies can be found on the Avon and Somerset Police Website www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/

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