

St Oswald's C of E Primary School

# Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy



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## **Section 1: The Policy**

### **Aims**

The Best Council Plan 2020-2025 includes as one of its priorities “Safe, Strong Communities - keeping people safe from harm, protecting the most vulnerable”. Achievement and progress towards this will be measured against a key performance indicator in relation to levels of self-reporting in relation to domestic violence incidents.

Our School as an employer is committed to ensuring that domestic violence and abuse towards or by its employees is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It is essential therefore that the working environment promotes this view and that ALL individuals, irrespective of any additional barriers that they may face, feel confident that they can talk about any concerns confidentially and will be listened to.

This policy aims to ensure that all staff and managers are aware of the impact that domestic violence and abuse can have on an individual, a family or wider society, and that all staff know where to seek help and support if they or a colleague are affected by domestic violence or abuse.

It is acknowledged both in Leeds and nationally that domestic violence and abuse is significantly under-reported. By raising awareness amongst staff about the support available, it is hoped that this policy may also lead to an increase in the number of victims self reporting to the police.

### **The Law**

The Domestic Abuse Act was passed into law in April 2021.

#### **The Act creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse:**

‘Abusive behaviour’ is defined in the act as any of the following:

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

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and ‘personally connected’.

We acknowledge that Domestic Violence and Abuse can take place in many forms and in many different intimate and familial settings including female to male abuse, abuse within same sex relationships, elder abuse, peer on peer abuse, child to parent violence or adolescent to parent abuse, post separation abuse, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Act places a duty on local authorities to provide support to victims-survivors of Domestic Violence and Abuse and their children in refuges and safe accommodation.

It also ensures that a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, Domestic Violence and Abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of Domestic Violence and Abuse. Further information about the Act can be found [here](#).

### **What does the terminology mean?**

- **Controlling behaviour** is defined as: 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 defined as: 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.
- **Economic abuse** involves behaviours that interfere with an individual's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can be controlling or coercive. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety. Examples of economic abuse include:
  - having sole control of the family income;
  - preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits;
  - interfering with a victim's education, training, or employment;
  - not allowing or controlling a victim's access to mobile phone/transport/utilities/food;
  - damage to a victim's property

Further information about the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 can be found [Domestic Abuse Bill 2020: factsheets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **The scale of the issue**

An estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the year up to March 2020 (1.6 million women and 757,000 men) and the police recorded 758,941 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales. *Source: Crime Survey England and Wales.*

There is acknowledgement of significant underreporting of **all** incidents especially from groups with protected characteristics (eg. disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation).

**In Leeds** between Sept 2020 and Aug 2021 there were;

- 21,729 domestic incidents reported to West Yorkshire Police, Leeds District
  - 48% of these included repeat domestic incident victim (10,447 incidents)
  - 26% had children present (5,544 incidents)
  - 74% were female victims (14,712 incidents)
  - 24% were male victims (4,819 incidents)
- In Leeds since 2011 there have been 26 Domestic Homicide Reviews:
  - 22 of the 26 victims were women
  - 11 victims were aged 50 plus (of which 4 were over 60)
  - 4 victims were BAME
  - 4 homicide/suicide
  - 5 children killed alongside their mother

### **Key principles**

The key principles of this policy are:

- to recognise that domestic violence and abuse is a serious social and criminal issue leading to significant human and financial consequences for individuals, families, communities and organisations.
- to recognise that Domestic Violence and Abuse is prevalent in Leeds and that School's employees will therefore be impacted by it.
- to develop effective responses that will help to reduce the volume and minimise the impact of domestic violence and abuse on School employees.
- to provide support through the School's Employee Assistance Programme (Vivup) and other relevant agencies to those who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence and abuse in their personal or professional lives, or those who are perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.

### **Application**

- All employees will be made aware of the policy, procedure and guidance through publicity and/or training.
- Managers will use the procedure and guidance to support individuals who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
- Managers will use the procedure and guidance to direct perpetrators to relevant services.

## **Scope**

The policy and procedure:

- applies to all employees of our School
- should be considered in conjunction with the School's Managing Attendance Policy, Procedure and Guidance and Leave of Absence Policy.

## **Responsibility for reviewing this document**

It will be the responsibility of the Governing Body of the School and Headteacher to formally review this policy and procedure every 3 years, with any updates and revisions signed off following the School's negotiating and consultation processes. Reviews at other times may be necessary in the light of changes to legislation, policy and the Leeds Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy.

## **Further Guidance**

Anyone using this policy should also refer to the Guidance document. The Guidance also contains useful internal and external contacts / helpline numbers.

## Section 2: The Procedure

### **Roles and responsibilities**

Governing Bodies and Headteachers will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented in their School. The responsibilities borne by line managers and employees are outlined below:

#### **Line Managers**

- Listen and believe.
- Do not judge.
- Keep confidential notes of all discussions.
- Maintain regular contact with the employee, particularly if you or they are predominantly working from home.
- The role of the manager is not to take on casework, but to signpost individuals to the professional support that is available and to make it clear through this policy, and their own actions, that employees will be supported.
- Ensure that access to this policy and guidance is available to every employee.
- Where domestic violence and abuse is identified, respond appropriately and effectively.
- Maximise safety for all employees carrying out their duties.
- Undertake stress risk assessment.
- Ensure confidentiality in maintaining records and discussing support.
- Consider and discuss the range of supportive measures available from the School, with employees and HR Domestic Violence and Abuse Ambassadors (contactable via HR).
- Encourage and support individuals to access a HR Domestic Violence and Abuse Ambassador and the School's Employee Assistance Programme.
- Be aware of what appropriate services and policies are available.
- Ask if some check-in contact would be helpful during periods of leave
- If it becomes known that a School employee has committed an act of domestic violence, advice should always be sought from the HR Service before considering further action.
- Act with integrity and be accountable for your own actions.
- Consider safeguarding issues and act accordingly.

#### **All Employees**

- Have a duty to follow the policy and procedure and if they do not understand anything, speak to: their manager, the HR service, trade union or a HR Domestic Violence and Abuse Ambassador (contactable via Schools HR Advice line on 0113 37 88525).
- Be supportive and non-judgemental towards colleagues.
- Maintain confidentiality – do not discuss sensitive information about colleagues.



- Report any incidents of unwelcome contact, harassment or intimidation which you become aware of at work by an alleged perpetrator (see page 6, Employees who are perpetrators of domestic violence).
- Report any safeguarding concerns to a manager.

### **HR Domestic Violence and Abuse Ambassadors**

- Work as part of a wider cross-council team of Domestic Violence Ambassadors, raising the profile of the domestic violence and abuse agenda and communicating this to services to maintain high levels of awareness across the organisation.
- Be familiar with the policy and procedure and attend the appropriate training.
- Be available and approachable for those employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
- Be available to managers to advise on the implementation of this policy.
- Listen, reassure and support employees who contact you.
- Keep any information confidential, within the boundaries outlined in the guidance.
- Respond in a sensitive, non-judgmental manner.
- Ensure that any employee who is experiencing domestic violence and abuse is aware of the options available to them to help them to make informed choices.
- Encourage the employee to seek the advice of other relevant agencies.
- **Can be contacted in confidence via the Schools HR advice line on 0113 37 88525.**

### **Employees who are victim-survivors of domestic violence and abuse**

If you are the victim-survivor of domestic violence and abuse, you may feel that you are unable to talk to anyone about your situation. You may be afraid or worried about the consequences that this might have on you, your family, your home, your job or your income. You do not have to keep this to yourself; there is help and support available.

You will find contact details and more information about the range of confidential support that is available to you;

- On the LCC website [Domestic violence and abuse \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse)
- This site also includes details of specific agencies who offer support to male victim-survivors, LGBT+ victim-survivors and those from BAME communities.
- by contacting the **Leeds Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours) on 0113 246 0401 or via their website** <https://ldvs.uk> [Leeds Domestic Violence Service – 24hr helpline 0113 246 0401 hello@ldvs.uk](mailto:hello@ldvs.uk)
- or you may prefer to talk to your manager or the HR service in confidence.

## **Responding appropriately to victim-survivors of domestic violence and abuse**

Managers must have a sensitive and non-judgmental approach when dealing with employees who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse. This can include:

- taking the employee at face value and offering time to listen to them;
- ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in private, clearly stating the extent and boundaries of confidentiality, (see section on Confidentiality in the guidance);
- understanding that the employee may not wish to approach their line manager and might opt to involve others, such as a colleague, a trade union representative or a HR Domestic Violence and Abuse Ambassador. It may be appropriate to offer the option of speaking to another colleague or someone from the HR team who will be able to advise the employee and/or their line manager of what measures can be taken;
- being aware that there may be additional issues faced by the employee because of, for example, their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, disability, religion or belief. Local research by Leeds Women's Aid found that many LGBT+ victims have additional fears including fear experiencing homophobia, transphobia, or a feeling that there isn't appropriate professional support available for them (e.g. services for trans and non-binary people). These additional barriers often prevent reporting.

Managers are not expected to understand all the cultural or emotional differences in each case but are obliged to treat people equally and with respect in responding to any additional needs. If you need specific advice in relation to any of the above contact Schools HR Advice Line on 0113 3788525

- being non-judgmental - the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options over a period of time. Research has shown that it can take several years to break free of a violent relationship and you should, for example, not assume that because an individual returns or stays in a violent relationship, that the violence was not severe, did not take place, or that they did not want it to stop;
- being aware of what support is available and exploring these options with the employee. If the employee does not want you to contact other agencies, you must respect their wishes unless there is an overriding safeguarding concern.

## **Employees who are alleged perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse**

Abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator. Domestic abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. If you are hurting somebody or feel that you are at risk of potentially hurting somebody, and want help please contact the Respect National Helpline for advice and support. [Help For Domestic Violence Perpetrators | Respect Phonenumber UK](#)

Conduct and behaviour outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) can lead to disciplinary action being taken against an employee because of the impact it may have on the employee's suitability to carry out their role and/or because it undermines public confidence in the School. Where appropriate, there will be an investigation of the facts as far as possible, and a decision made as to whether the conduct and behaviour is sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action being taken.

Factors that will be considered are:

- the nature of any criminal justice proceedings and/or convictions;
- the nature of the conduct and the nature of the employee's work;
- the extent to which the employee's role involves contact with other employees or the general public;
- whether the employee poses a risk to other members of staff, pupils or the public, and;
- If any of the circumstances set out in the above paragraphs are brought to a manager's attention, advice should be sought in the first instance from the HR service.

## **Responding appropriately to employees when both the alleged perpetrator and victim-survivor work for the School**

In this situation, additional considerations will need to be given and managers should seek additional advice from the Domestic Violence Team or the Schools HR Service.

- Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. However, where safeguarding concerns are raised please refer to the confidentiality section on p12.
- Give consideration to moving one or both of the employees (any move of the victim-survivor should respect their feelings as well as their safety; no move of the victim-survivor should be done without their full consent).
- We have a duty of care for both members of staff. A separate HR contact officer should be allocated for each member of staff to maintain impartiality.

## **Responding appropriately when there is uncertainty about who is the victim-survivor and who is the perpetrator**

In a situation where two employees are accusing each other of being the perpetrator, and are both saying that they are the victim-survivor, both employees should be believed and supported in the same way. It is not the role of the employer to establish the facts of the case. As detailed in the section above the organisation has a duty of care to both members of staff and, as possible victim-survivors, both individuals should be supported and directed to professional advice via the Leeds Domestic Violence Service. If both employees are in the same work location please contact HR for advice about managing the situation.

## **Indirect impact of domestic abuse**

It is recognised that domestic violence and abuse has an impact beyond the direct victim-survivor. Friends and family are also impacted as they support victim-survivors with moving forward, perhaps involving legal proceedings or maybe trying to understand why their friend or family member may choose to stay and 'manage' the situation. This has a big emotional impact and all employees should be reminded that they can access Employee Assistance Programme (Vivup) tel 03303 800658. Special leave should be considered if they are required to support the victim-survivor at formal meetings or legal proceedings.

## **Section 3: The Guidance**

This Policy uses the statutory definition of domestic abuse as laid down in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The full definition is on page 4 of the Policy document.

## **Identifying a domestic violence and abuse situation (Managers and all staff)**

One in four women will experience domestic violence and abuse at some point in their life time. This means it is likely that all workplaces will have staff who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence and abuse, as well as those who are perpetrators.

On average a woman will experience 35 episodes of domestic abuse before seeking help (Jaffe et al 1986). Male victims of domestic abuse, particularly if abused by a female, may be less likely to talk about their situation. It can therefore be very difficult for an employee who experiences domestic violence to tell people at work about their situation, or to approach their manager with their problems.

However, it is possible that the manager will become aware of the situation through associated issues identified in the managing attendance process or through performance reviews. As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage can lead to appropriate help being offered. This in turn could mean the employee is able to deal with their situation far more effectively, and before risk escalates.

It may also be possible that colleagues identify domestic violence and abuse through changes in behaviour or comments made by somebody that they work alongside. The employee may choose to discuss this with the individual or alert their manager to their concerns.

## **Confidentiality**

If an employee discloses to their manager that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse, the manager should reassure them that they will keep this information confidential as far as possible. One of the exceptions to this is where child protection issues arise or a vulnerable adult may be at risk. For instance, if an employee gives information that suggests a young person or child is at risk from abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or from neglect. In these circumstances, the manager should inform the employee that they will seek further advice from an appropriate agency, for example, the Children's Social Work Service, and that they may have to pass information on to other bodies. Information and advice on child protection and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults is available via the relevant Safeguarding Teams with details on the Council's In-Site. For further advice on this please contact the Schools HR Advice line on 0113 3788525.

In most situations, the manager will signpost to a specialist service to assess the risk to the person and to provide appropriate support. Some managers may be in a position to carry out a DASH risk assessment where they have been trained to do so. This may lead to a referral into the Daily Domestic Violence meeting or MARAC even when the person concerned does not give consent. Managers who are considering referral to MARAC in these circumstances should seek advice from HR who can liaise with the MARAC Coordinator.

## **Disclosure**

If the employee discloses information about their domestic violence and abuse situation to colleagues, the manager should remind these members of staff that this information is confidential and that any unauthorised disclosure could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.

The consequences of breaching this duty of confidentiality could have serious effects for the employee experiencing domestic violence and abuse, potentially increasing the risk to their safety. It could exacerbate the domestic violence and abuse and impact on the employee's family, their working arrangements and social activity.

Statistics have shown that the risk of more serious assaults, permanent injury and murder takes place when a person decides to leave an abusive relationship, or immediately after. It is important therefore, not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of violence is exaggerated.

## **Health, safety and well-being**

Managers have a duty to maintain a secure environment for all staff. The School has developed a Violence at Work policy and guidance for managers to deal with incidents where an employee is verbally abused or threatened, or physically assaulted in the course of their duties.

The interventions outlined in the Violence at Work policy will apply to most situations of violence in the workplace, however, managers may have to consider additional factors if these relate to domestic violence and abuse. For example, it may involve a violent partner or ex-partner visiting the workplace, making abusive phone calls, sending e-mails, or intimidating and harassing the employee. Managers will also need to consider the implications for staff working from home (see page 15).

Where there are issues such as these, the manager should consider the following preventative and supportive measures:

- Support the employee to establish a personal safety plan (information about safety strategies can be found on page 21).
- Improve security measures on entry to buildings, for example, changing key pad numbers or ensuring no access is available to unauthorised visitors.
- Remind employees, including those on reception not to divulge personal information about employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.
- Offer temporary or permanent changes in workplace, work times and patterns that will minimise an employee's risk both at work and during their journeys to and from work. This could include relocating the individual within the school setting to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or ground floor windows.
- Offer a change in specific duties, such as not requiring the employee to answer phones or work in reception area, or in exceptional circumstances, redeployment to another post if an alternative option is not available.
- Agree how to make colleagues aware of how to respond if the (alleged) perpetrator rings or calls at the workplace. Provide colleagues with a description of the perpetrator and other relevant details such as car registration numbers. These steps will help to heighten awareness of security in the workplace.
- If there is the need for such discussions with colleagues, in agreement with the employee, the manager should remind staff that the information about the domestic violence and

abuse situation is confidential. Any unauthorised breach of confidentiality could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.

- Ensure systems for recording employee's whereabouts during the day are adequate, and where work requires visits outside the office, consider how risks can be minimised. This could include a change in working duties, ensuring the employee is accompanied by a colleague, and that a mobile phone is carried by the employee.
- Record any incidents of violence in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, e-mails or visits to the employee by their partner/ex-partner. A record should also be kept of any witnesses to these incidents as these records could be used in any criminal proceedings or civil action against the alleged perpetrator.

If it is known that an alleged perpetrator is impinging on the health and safety of a member of staff, legal action can be taken and advice should be sought from Leeds City Council's Legal and Democratic Services.

When considering preventative and supportive measures, the manager may be required to take account of whether these are operationally appropriate, however, ensuring the safety of employees should be of primary concern throughout this process.

### **Employees at Higher Risk of Serious Harm**

There are certain times / events when the risk of domestic violence and abuse increases so it is important that managers understand this and that employees know where they can access support

- Point of leaving
- Pregnancy
- Working from home / hybrid working

#### **Point of leaving**

Individuals often attempt to leave several times before making the final break. Leaving an abusive partner can be very dangerous. Women are at the greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner. It is important that victims-survivors plan their departure safely and that they continue to be supported once they have left. It cannot be assumed that they are safe even if they have moved to a new property and have security measures installed. Ongoing support will still be needed.

## **Pregnant staff**

Research by the NHS highlights that pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic violence and abuse. Existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after giving birth. It can put the woman and the unborn child in danger, it increases the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, and injury or death to the baby. The woman can subsequently experience stress and anxiety, which can affect the development of the baby (NHS March 2020).

Lewis, G, Drife, J, et al. (2001) highlight that nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incidence of violence happened while they were pregnant. Domestic abuse has overtaken gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia as the leading cause of foetal death and an estimated 1.3 million women each year are affected – 8.2% of the population. Around 30% of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy, while 40–60% of women experiencing domestic abuse are abused during pregnancy (Taken from *A Cry for Health: Why we must invest in domestic abuse services in hospitals 2016*).

Managers should complete a **Pregnancy Risk Assessment** whenever an employee advises them that they are pregnant. This now includes a question about whether the individual considers themselves to be at risk of domestic violence and abuse. It also asks whether they would know where to access advice and support if needed, either now or during their maternity leave.

## **Working from home / hybrid working**

Whilst the full extent of abuse during the COVID-19 lockdowns is not known, there was an increase in reported domestic violence and abuse in the weeks immediately after the restrictions were lifted. This would indicate that many people were not able to access support at the time but reached out for help as soon as they were able to do so. The situation enabled perpetrators to increase their control over their victims (they had a reason for saying that their victims couldn't leave the house or meet family and friends), and being at home also limited the opportunities when individuals could access support.

With the shift to hybrid working, which includes working from home, this could continue to be an issue for some employees. If employees are working from home they should have regular check-ins with their manager and a plan for spending some time in the workplace. All staff will be able to attend a workplace full time if they wish to do so, particularly if this is for safeguarding reasons.

## **Other triggers of increased risk**

There are other times when anecdotal evidence suggests that individuals may be at increased risk of domestic violence and abuse due to external triggers. These include Christmas and other religious events, large sporting events, periods of leave, any life changing event /



changes in personal circumstances, eg. retirement, long term ill health etc. Alcohol and/or substance abuse in the household can also increase the level of risk.

## **Stalking**

Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviour that causes the individual to feel distressed or scared. It can be perpetrated by men or women. Stalking can happen with or without a fear of violence. This means that if somebody is receiving persistent unwanted contact that is causing them distress has never been threatened, this is still stalking and is not acceptable.

Stalking often has a huge emotional impact on those it affects. It can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and even post traumatic stress disorder. It can be a psychological as well as a physical crime. (*source Suzy Lamplugh Trust*).

Individuals may be at an increased risk of stalking after a relationship has ended.

If an employee is concerned that they are being stalked they can seek advice from the National Stalking Helpline on 0808 802 0300 or via this website [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

The website contains specific advice for individuals (and their managers) who may be lone working. There is also advice about travelling on public transport.

**MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference** [One minute guide: daily domestic violence meeting \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

- MARACs are daily multi agency meetings and aim to increase protection to high risk victims of domestic violence through a broad range of supportive interventions.
- If you need to make a MARAC referral you should complete the online form via the link above. If you need advice before submitting your referral, email either:  
[ld.domesticabuse@westyorkshire.police.uk](mailto:ld.domesticabuse@westyorkshire.police.uk)  
[LeedsSafeguardingPartnership@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:LeedsSafeguardingPartnership@leeds.gov.uk)
- In cases where the employee refuses to give consent to a referral, and where you consider them to be at high risk, you should nevertheless contact the above to discuss. You should inform the employee of your actions and of any outcomes.
- **If someone is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.** Remember to give this advice to any victim of domestic violence you support. Many victims will not consider their situation to be serious enough to call 999 so it is useful to remind them.

- West Yorkshire Police have also developed an online report form to report incidents in non-emergency situations; details can be found <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it/report-domestic-abuse>

## **Recording information**

Any discussions taking place about domestic violence and abuse and any actions agreed should be documented to provide as full a picture as possible. These records need to be clear and accurate, and where possible, dates, times and locations should be included. Records could be used to provide evidence in any potential legal action within the criminal or civil justice system. Records may be used as part of an internal review. However, these records should not, under any circumstances, be used to the detriment of an employee who has experienced abuse. The purpose of this policy is to support victims of abuse. Any records that we keep are for the express purpose of keeping the victim safe from harm. Any use of these records that undermine the victim at work, or causes harm to the victim, is inappropriate.

Records may be used in the event of a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). The DHR is a statutory process to review the actions of agencies following a death due to domestic violence.

As required by Data Protection legislation, any records should be kept in a locked cabinet; protected by a password if stored on computer or secure drive, and recorded by codes if used for statistical purposes, to maintain anonymity.

When line management changes the individual should be made aware of what information, if any, is going to be shared with the new manager to ensure ongoing support. If the individual does not give consent for the information to be shared that should also be documented.

## **Special leave**

In cases of domestic difficulty the local conditions of service has provision to allow both paid and unpaid leave at the discretion of the line manager. When an employee has disclosed that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse, the manager should consider favourably requests for reasonable time off with pay. Reasons for requests may include:

- appointments with support agencies, for example Women's Aid or counselling;
- arranging re-housing and possible emergency moves
- meetings with solicitors; and
- making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools.

Employees are entitled to special leave with pay to attend hearings as a witness in either the civil or criminal courts if they have been called under a witness order or summons.

Additionally, if there are circumstances where the employee is attending court and is seeking an injunction or order in cases of violence or harassment, time-off with pay should be considered.

Managers should record absences or applications for special leave in accordance with normal School procedures. Where a special leave request is made, the Manager will authorise, giving the reason as 'domestic circumstances' before it is then sent to the BSC for entering onto SAP.

### **Other supportive measures**

#### **School's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

Our School recognises the importance of providing support for employees who are affected by domestic violence. The School's employee assistance programme operates an independent, professional 24 hour telephone based information and counselling service which is provided free to School employees and their immediate family.

Employees and managers can use the service to discuss, in confidence, areas that are affecting their personal or work lives. By contacting the EAP the employee can discuss their concerns and explore how they can be supported with the situation. The employee does not have to disclose their identity, and they can use the service at any time to obtain information and guidance on a range of subjects.

These include:

- emotional support for individuals affected by domestic violence
- supporting individuals in crisis
- supporting groups of employees affected by a traumatic incident
- financial and legal advice

To discuss these or any other issues with a qualified counsellor, in confidence, please contact VIVUP ON 03303 800658.

### **Financial Support**

Individuals leaving a violent partner may face considerable financial hardship or have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. Confidential and sympathetic support can be sought from Leeds City Credit Union, either by direct contact from an individual or via a referral. Such referrals can be made regardless of whether the employee is an existing member of the Credit Union. Please contact Schools HR Advice line on 0113 3788525 for further information.

If the employee has disclosed that their partner has access to their finances or is exerting economic pressure upon them, the BSC could be approached to change the bank account into which the salary is paid.

Help with securing property is available from the Leeds Sanctuary Scheme to employees who are encountering domestic violence who wish to stay in their own home.

### **Other support**

- Leeds Domestic Violence 24 hour helpline on 0113 246 0401
- HR Domestic Violence Ambassadors – via Schools HR Advice line on 0113 37 88525
- Referring the employee to a Trade Union who will also offer support.
- Considering any request from an employee who is experiencing domestic violence and abuse, for a temporary variation to their normal working hours, in accordance with the School's flexible working policy.

If there is an adverse impact on the employee's health, or the employee is being monitored as part of the managing attendance process, it may be appropriate to make a referral to Occupational Health for further advice. Reference should be made to the Schools Managing Attendance Policy.

- There may be instances when an employee seeking support may not have English as a first language. Suitable arrangements would therefore need to be made to provide interpretation for people who use British Sign Language or other Community Languages. Advice can be sought and, where appropriate, interpreters can be booked through Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service and Central Interpretation and Translation Unit.
- Consider the additional issues and barriers some victims face relating to their sexuality, gender identity, ethnic origin, faith, age or disability status. It is always useful to ask the employee if they have any specific needs around equality and diversity issues.

## **Safety Strategies**

### How to be prepared to leave urgently

For the safety of you and your children, there may come a time when you are forced to leave your home urgently. It is useful, therefore, to try to be prepared. The following checklist of what you may need could help:

- Keep a list of important contact numbers.
- Have mobile phones charged.
- Keep important documents together.
- Try to have some money available.
- Have a bag prepared with a change of clothes, toiletries, toys – hidden or at someone else's house
- Increasing safety in the longer term

If you are separated from an abusive partner or even whilst still living together, there are ways in which you can feel safer and better supported. These are to:

- inform family/friends.
- ask neighbours to call the police in the event of them being aware of an incident.
- inform colleagues at work.
- inform those who take care of the children and name who can collect them.
- report and explain all injuries to health workers.
- secure your home.
- explain the situation to the children; talk honestly with them. It is important to consider any potential risks involved in safety planning to keep you and your children safe at all times.

## Key Support Agency Information

To ensure that the information about service providers and their contact numbers are always up to date please use the DVA pages on the LCC website.

[Domestic violence and abuse \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk)

### **Leeds Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours)**

**0113 246 0401**

Support, information and safe housing for people with and without children.

**RESPECT** – help and support for perpetrators

0808 8024040

[Help For Domestic Violence Perpetrators | Respect Phonenumber UK](#)

Police Emergency

999 (or 112 if abroad – available in 70+ countries with interpreters if needed)

Police Non Emergency. Ask for Safeguarding Unit.  
Online reporting – link is earlier in the document.

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National Stalking Helpline

0808 802 0300

Website: [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

Leeds Housing Options – for emergency housing advice

0113 222 4412

Website: [Home - Leeds Homes](#)