

## Domestic abuse victims - Workplace support

### Overview

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**Introduction** West Yorkshire Police treats domestic abuse seriously and will not tolerate or ignore it. It is unacceptable behaviour and the responsibility for it lies with the perpetrator.

We have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all our staff.

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**Definition** Domestic abuse is defined as “any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender and sexuality.”

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**Scope** This policy guidance applies to all police officers, special constables and police staff working within West Yorkshire Police.

It is solely concerned with the workplace support and protection of victims of domestic abuse who work for West Yorkshire police.

Dealing with allegations of domestic abuse perpetrated by anyone who works for the Force are dealt with under separate policy guidance entitled Domestic abuse – Alleged offender is a police employee, which can be accessed via [this link](#).

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**Victims** Both men and women can suffer domestic abuse. It occurs regardless of social group class, age, race, religion, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or lifestyle.

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**Effects** Common effects observed in the workplace as a result of suffering domestic abuse:

No	Effect
1	stress;
2	emotional and physical health problems;
3	absenteeism;
4	staff turnover;
5	loss of productivity; and
6	behaviour that threatens the safety of other members of staff.

**Related Force Policy** There are other Force Policy documents which you may like to refer to. These are:

- Flexible working - police staff**
- Part time working - police staff**
- Part time and job share - police officers**
- Time off for dependants - police staff** - PSC Terms and Conditions section 2.9.2
- Time off for dependants - police officers**
- Police Regulations 2003**
- Special leave - police staff** - PSC Terms and Conditions section 2.9

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**Further information** Further information may be obtained from:

- Personnel Advisory Teams
- Professional Standards Department

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## **Duty of care**

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**Upholding the law** All police officers have a duty of care to uphold the law where a criminal offence is suspected. Therefore they must report, through the appropriate procedures, if any information about a domestic abuse related criminal offence is disclosed.

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**Protecting victims** Both police officers and police staff also have a duty of care to protect victims of domestic abuse and have an obligation to report, through the appropriate procedures, any allegation of domestic abuse. To not do so might put the victim and others in danger.

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## **Confidentiality**

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**Introduction** There is also a duty to maintain confidentiality for the victim and this should be paramount in any response to information divulged. As domestic abuse is a crime and must be dealt with as such confidentiality for the victim cannot always be fully guaranteed. However, everything possible will be done to maintain it.

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**Protection of children and vulnerable adults** In cases of child protection, or the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse, the child protection and adult protection services may need to be involved. Complete confidentiality in these circumstances cannot be guaranteed as this is standard procedure.

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In these circumstances, managers should inform victims that advice may be sought from an appropriate agency such as Social Services or the Child Protection Agency and they may have to pass this information on to these bodies.

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**Breaches of confidentiality** Managers should be aware that any breach in confidentiality might have serious side effects for the person experiencing domestic abuse and they should offer the appropriate support and advice as required.

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## **Liaising with the victim**

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**Appropriate person** Where the alleged perpetrator is arrested and detained, an appropriate person will be identified at the risk assessment / safety planning meeting to liaise with the victim. The Liaison Officer:

- should be of an appropriate rank; and
- have the relevant training and experience.

Consideration should be given to using specialist domestic abuse / child protection and/or family liaison officers to assist a senior ranking officer in providing such information and support.

This appointment will be constantly reviewed at the risk assessment / safety planning meeting throughout the investigation.

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**Explanation** The Force will ensure that our policies are fully explained to the victim and they are kept fully informed as to the:

No	Informed regarding
1	progress of the investigation;
2	progress of the internal investigation and misconduct process; and
3	level of support they will receive and from whom.

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## **Workplace support – guidance for managers**

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**Openness and trust** The Force is committed to early intervention and to creating a supportive environment to encourage you, as the manager, and members of staff to be alert to the possibility of abuse.

Typically a member of staff who experiences domestic abuse will not tell colleagues or approach you with their problems. It is therefore important that you create a secure and trusting working environment where anyone experiencing abuse will feel confident in seeking help if they require it.

**Issues**

It is more likely that you will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as:

No	Issue
1	absence monitoring;
2	poor performance;
3	physical signs; or
4	Performance Development Review.

**Not ready to divulge**

If a member of staff who is showing signs of abuse doesn't want to confide in a colleague or you, then you should remain alert to any further indications of violence as they may wish to divulge information at a later date.

**Choosing to divulge**

You must be sensitive when dealing with members of staff who have experienced domestic abuse, and actively support those who choose to talk about their situation.

This includes:

Step	Action
1	arranging a room for privacy;
2	taking them seriously by listening and believing what they say;
3	not being judgmental;
4	not underestimating the danger or assuming the fear of violence is exaggerated;
5	talking about <b>confidentiality</b> ;
6	taking reasonable steps to minimise any risk to them at work - see the section on <b>risk assessments</b> ;
7	being aware that there may also be additional issues faced by the member of staff such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age;</li> <li>• gender;</li> <li>• sexuality;</li> <li>• ethnicity;</li> <li>• disability;</li> <li>• mental/physical health; and</li> <li>• social isolation etc;</li> </ul>
8	telling them about specialist agencies where appropriate and ask if they wish to contact them. Victim Support will have addresses and contact telephone numbers for these agencies; and
9	asking them if they would prefer to speak to someone from the support groups and services (listed below).

**Support**

As with other welfare issues, identifying that a member of staff is

**groups and services**

experiencing difficulties at an early stage will help you offer appropriate help.

You should consider asking if any of the support services the Force has in place may assist the victim, or if they have already been accessed.

Support for them may come from:

No	Group or service
1	<u>Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare</u>
2	<u>Force Chaplain Scheme</u>
3	<u>Access to services of relate counselling</u>
4	<u>Trade Union Representative Unison</u>
5	<u>Trade Union Representative GMB</u>
6	<u>Police Federation</u>
7	<u>Personnel Advisory Team</u>
8	<u>Diversity Unit</u>

**Financial hardship**

Individuals leaving a violent partner may face financial hardship or have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their families. The Occupational Health, Safety Welfare section of the Force Policy Database contains information on:

- Employee Benevolent Fund
- National Police Fund
- advice on money issues
- West Yorkshire Police Loan fund

A new bank account may need to be opened and Finance Department notified.

**Compassionate or special leave**

Members of staff who have disclosed that they are experiencing domestic abuse may apply for compassionate or special leave. You should sympathetically consider giving approval, in accordance with the respective procedures which can be accessed via the above links.

You should record approval for compassionate or special leave on NSPIS HR in accordance with Force policy.

**Personal files**

Written records of incidents relating to domestic abuse should be placed in a sealed envelope and placed on the individual's personal file and marked, 'For managers and the individual concerned to access only.'

**VIVID**

Every incident of violence will be recorded on the Vulnerable and

Intimidated Victims Database, VIVID.

There is a facility on VIVID to conceal the information in certain circumstances and keep it confidential.

## Risk assessments

**Introduction** The Force will take reasonable steps to minimise any risk to the safety of staff whilst they are at work.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 requires employees to assess the risk of violence to staff and make arrangements for their health and safety by planning, organisation and control.

**Considerations** You should consider the risks of violent partners or ex-partners:

No	Risk
1	visiting the work place;
2	making abusive phone calls;
3	intimidating your staff; or
4	harassing them.

**Assessment** You should ensure that your staff are aware of:

- the need for security and only allow access to authorised visitors; and
- the Data Protection Act and that details of staff are not given to others, especially personal details, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

You should:

Step	Action
1	Offer temporary changes in workplace, work times and patterns.
2	Change office layouts to ensure that they are not visible to the public.
3	In exceptional cases, consider redeploying or transferring them to another post in consultation with the Director of Personnel. This would be actioned in accordance with Force policy.  It should be borne in mind that a victim of domestic abuse should not be transferred or redeployed into a role which brings them into contact with incidents of domestic abuse as this might cause unnecessary distress and suffering.

4	<p>Monitor the whereabouts of the member of staff, and if they are required to make outside visits consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the risks can be minimised;</li> <li>• changing their duties or allowing a colleague to accompany them.</li> </ul> <p>The risk assessment should highlight if this course of action is necessary.</p>
5	<p>Agree with them what to tell colleagues and how colleagues should respond if the alleged perpetrator rings or visits the workplace. Providing colleagues with a photograph and a car registration number will help to maintain security in the workplace.</p> <p>If a colleague believes that the alleged perpetrator is present in the car park, or in the vicinity of the building, they should tell you or another appropriate manager immediately.</p>
6	<p>Record any incidents in the workplace, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• violence;</li> <li>• 'phone calls;</li> <li>• e-mails; or</li> <li>• visits.</li> </ul> <p>These records can be used to apply for an injunction if the actions of the alleged perpetrator impinge on the health and safety of staff.</p>
7	<p>Take into account whether the above measures are operationally appropriate. However, the health and safety of staff is of primary consideration throughout this guidance.</p>

## Alleged perpetrator works for the Force

**Note** In all of the following circumstances the Personnel Advisory Team should be contacted for advice and kept informed.

**Introduction** Proven harassment and intimidation of Force staff by their partner or ex-partner who also works for the Force will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator. It can also lead to a criminal conviction.

This is dealt with under separate policy guidance entitled:

- Domestic abuse - Dealing with the alleged police perpetrator, which can be accessed via [this link](#); and
- Discipline procedure – police staff, which can be accessed via [this link](#).

**Conduct outside work**

Conduct outside work, whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction, can still lead to disciplinary action.

There will be an investigation of the facts as far as possible. Consideration will be given as to whether the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant instituting disciplinary procedures.

Discipline procedure – police staff, which can be accessed via [this link](#).

**Factors**

The following factors will be considered:

Step	Action
1	the nature of the conduct;
2	the extent to which it involves other police officers or members of staff; and
3	the extent to which it involves the general public.

**Change of duties**

Some conduct may make certain duties inappropriate and justify the alleged perpetrator being considered for redeployment or transfer. For example, it would be inappropriate for a perpetrator of domestic abuse to be:

- providing services to vulnerable people; or
- attending reports of domestic abuse incidents.

In these circumstances divisional or departmental management teams would need to consider a change of duties, redeployment or transfer.

## Policy database administration

**Document information**

The table below lists the details relating to this document.

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