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Lewes District Council



Working in partnership with **Eastbourne Homes**

Eastbourne and Lewes Councils Staff Domestic Abuse Policy 2023

Policy Summary:

Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils believe that no person should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy sets out our approach to supporting employees who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. The policy also covers the approach we will take if there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

We commit to treating all reports of domestic abuse seriously. We will create a safe workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

We understand that there are many barriers to reporting domestic abuse, but encourage employees affected to raise the issue in the knowledge that we will treat the matter empathetically and confidentially. You can report domestic abuse or seek support from your line manager, a colleague, a member of the Human Resources Team, a Mental Health First Aider, or a union representative. We also have a network of Domestic Abuse Champions, who understand domestic abuse and can offer you support.

If you have any queries about this policy or our approach to domestic abuse, you should contact the Senior Specialist Advisor – Domestic Abuse or Safeguarding Lead. They oversee our response to domestic abuse with support from other employees.

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Document name:	Domestic Abuse Staff Policy
Document type:	Policy

Authority(ies) Covered:	Aligned
Responsible (Executive Lead):	
Accountable (Operational Lead):	Liz Martin
Version (e.g. first draft, final report):	8 th Draft
Approved by:	
Date of publication:	
Revision due:	
Equality and Fairness Analysis (EaFA) report approved by:	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils have a zero-tolerance approach to violence or abuse towards our employees, including domestic abuse. We ensure the provision of non-judgemental support for those who suffer it. We recognise that developing a life free from abuse is a process, not an event. We will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.
- 1.2 Where we use "you" or "your" we mean members of staff. The terms 'we', 'our' and 'us' means Eastbourne and Lewes Councils.
- 1.3 Every case of domestic abuse will be taken seriously, and everyone will be given access to the support they need. All victims/survivors will be able to access appropriate support.
- 1.4 We recognise domestic abuse can happen to anyone, and may be experienced differently due to, and compounded by, social background, disability, age, gender, religion, culture, class, mental health, sexuality, or ethnicity. We will recognise this intersectionality and understand that certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination
- 1.5 Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. They are also more likely to have experienced sustained physical, psychological, or emotional abuse, or violence which results in injury or death. We will consider the individual needs of each survivor when tailoring our approach. We acknowledge that abuse can be perpetrated by partners, ex-partners, and family members, including children under the age of 18, adult children or siblings.
- 1.6 This policy applies to all Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Council employees, as well as to agency employees. We have a separate Domestic Abuse Policy for tenants/residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse. We continue to be committed to supporting:
- employee health
 - wellbeing
 - safety at work
- 1.7 We recognise that you may be affected by domestic abuse as:
- a survivor of domestic abuse
 - an individual living with domestic abuse
 - impacted upon by domestic abuse
 - a perpetrator of domestic abuse
- 1.8 Our policy covers how we will support:
- individuals experiencing or impacted by domestic abuse
 - where there are concerns that an employee is abusing others
 - employees seeking help if affected by domestic abuse

- 1.9 We recognise that domestic abuse is an equalities issue. We will not discriminate against anyone subjected to domestic abuse in terms of employment or future development.
- 1.10 If you are experiencing any form of domestic abuse, we encourage you to seek support from your line manager. You can also contact Human Resources (HR) the Safeguarding Lead, a [Safeguarding Contact](#), a Domestic Abuse Champion and/or a designated [Mental Health First Aider](#).

2. Principles

- 2.1 If you are a victims/survivor of domestic abuse you can feel confident to disclose domestic abuse to staff at the Councils. Your disclosure will always be taken seriously, and you will be supported to identify any support you would like following this.
- 2.2 You can speak to your line manager about concerns regarding colleagues in confidence.
- 2.3 We will ensure for employees who disclose any experience of domestic abuse that the information they provide is confidential. We will not ordinarily share this with other members of staff without their permission. Exceptions to this may occur when:
- there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults
 - we need to act to directly protect the safety of any employee
- 2.4 We will treat any disclosure, of a domestic abuse-related offence on a case-by-case basis. We aim to reduce risk and support healthy change for our employees.

3. Definitions of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 Within the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) and this policy, domestic abuse is defined as any of the following:
- physical or sexual abuse.
 - violent or threatening behaviour.
 - controlling or coercive behaviour.
 - economic abuse.
 - psychological, emotional, or other abuse.
 - this definition includes modern day slavery, coercive control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 3.3 It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour.
- 3.4 For the definition and policy to apply, both people must be aged 16 or over and personally connected
- 3.5 Personally, connected is defined in the act as people who:
- are married to each other.
 - are civil partners of each other.
 - have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement is still in place);

- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement is still in place);
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- are, or have been, parents of the same child or children
- are relatives.

3.6 Please See **Appendix 1** for more detailed definitions of types of abuse that fall under Domestic Abuse.

3.7 If you are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse please remember that you are not alone and are not to blame. You can refer to any of the support services detailed in this policy and on our website. Our Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health support services are also available. More detailed information can be found below:

3.7.1 [Employee Assistance Programme.](#)

4. Support if you are experiencing domestic abuse

4.1 We recognise that living a life free from abuse is a process not an event, and we will provide ongoing support for those who disclose abuse. We will respond sympathetically, confidentially, and effectively to our employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse.

4.2 We will always try to maintain a secure environment for you at work. We may need to inform colleagues about potential risks and refer to appropriate agencies, always with your consent. These agencies will explore further options with you.

4.3 We employ staff who are trained to deal with reports of domestic abuse. Our lead member of staff on domestic abuse is the Senior Specialist Advisor – Domestic Abuse who, with support from other employees, oversees our response to domestic abuse.

4.4 The person offering support will not counsel you but will offer information, workplace support, and signpost you to relevant support within and outside the Councils. You can also seek advice from the [Employee Assistance Programme.](#) (EAP).

4.5 We will prioritise your safety if we know that you are experiencing domestic abuse. We will encourage you to contact a specialist support agency or suitably trained employees. With your consent, they will work with you, your manager, and other agencies to identify what actions we can take to increase your personal safety. They will also address any risks there may be to other colleagues. This may include discussions around safeguarding, in line with our [Safeguarding Policy.](#)

5. Adjustments to your working arrangements

5.1 Line managers will consider incidents such as violence in the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation, or harassment by the perpetrator, and will address this in any safety planning that is required. Safety planning could involve a broad range of support, which may include but is not limited to:

- temporary or permanent changes to your working times and patterns changes to specific duties, for example, to avoid potential contact with an abuser.
- agreeing with you what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the perpetrator makes contact.

- contacting you regularly if you are working from home.
- discussing redeployment.
- measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example, changing your telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- using other existing policies, including [Councils Annual Leave and Time Off Guidance](#) .

5.2 We recognise if you are experiencing domestic abuse you may need to take time off work to attend:

- counselling sessions
- legal appointments
- domestic abuse support appointments
- make alternative living arrangements

5.3 We will make every effort to assist you if you need to be absent from work. Within the [Councils Annual Leave and Time Off Guidance](#) there is an acknowledgment that we understand that there may be times when you need time to resolve problems outside of work. Circumstances may arise where it is appropriate to grant you special leave of up to 5 working days, in addition to your annual leave entitlement.

5.4 We will consider requests for special leave sympathetically in the light of individual circumstances. For longer term situations it may be necessary for other solutions to be considered as per the guidance e.g. annual leave, flexi leave, unpaid leave, reduced working hours.

5.5 Line managers can use the Councils [Safeguarding Policy](#) for additional guidance when dealing with disclosures about domestic abuse. They can also contact a designated Safeguarding Contact. A list of these contacts can be found at [here](#).

5.6 This will allow them to determine the most appropriate course of action and response for you. Your manager may also contact the Senior Specialist Advisor - Domestic Abuse or Safeguarding Lead who will be able to offer further advice and guidance on the next steps to support you, this may include completing a safeguarding referral.

5.7 The Safeguarding Contact or suitably trained employee should, with your consent, complete a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Abuse (DASH) risk assessment - www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk . The risk assessment will help them to determine the most appropriate course of action and response. If you decline to complete a DASH risk assessment this should be kept under review and may be re.

5.8 Domestic abuse policy will occasionally overlap with safeguarding policy. In line with the [Safeguarding Policy](#) , if an adult is experiencing abuse or neglect and has care & support needs and/ or lacks mental capacity, a safeguarding report should be made to Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC).

5.9 However, there will be some cases where the best route to support is through domestic abuse specialist services, and not a referral to HSCC. Each case will need to be considered. If managers are unsure of next steps and how best to support you, they will

contact either a Safeguarding Contact or the Council's Safeguarding Lead for further guidance.

5.10 We will respect your right to make your own decisions at every stage while supporting you. It is important that individuals who have experienced domestic abuse are supported to access and consider their options.

5.11 We will continue to:

- speak to you to around your options around reporting the abuse and the potential need to inform the police
- provide details of specialist domestic abuse services

5.12 If we are aware that there are children involved (whether living with the abused or abuser) they will contact the Single Point of Advice SPOA (Children's Services) at East Sussex County Council on 01424 724120.

5. Reviewing an employee's circumstances

5.1 Many workplace actions and safeguards are temporary. Your manager should discuss safety and review changes in circumstances with you at regular intervals.

6. Confidentiality and your right to privacy

6.1 We respect your right to privacy. We will never force you to share any information you do not want to.

6.2 All disclosures regarding domestic abuse will be treated as confidential, however there may be occasions where we will be required to raise our concerns with the appropriate agencies for example cases involving the safety of children or where the individual is in danger of immediate harm. We will only do this after careful consideration and taking specialist advice. In these circumstances, a manager will discuss this with you to explain why we are doing so. We will always seek your agreement where possible.

6.3 We will contact the police if we believe you:

- are at imminent high risk of significant harm or death
- and, a crime has been committed

6.4 Agencies such as the police may request personal data about our employees as part of their own investigations. In these cases, the Senior Specialist Advisor – Domestic Abuse and Head of Human Resources will assess these requests.

6.5 When working with partners we may need to share some information about the case and the individual. We will only share information with your permission, unless there is a risk to the safeguarding of children, or a vulnerable adult and it is a duty of care.

6.6 We keep all records concerning domestic abuse strictly confidential. We will only share this information on a need-to-know basis. We will take any breach of confidentiality by an employee seriously and may take disciplinary action.

6.7 We will always take care to avoid the double disclosure of confidential information.

7. When someone may need help – Information for Managers and Colleagues.

- 7.1 A colleague experiencing domestic abuse may not feel able to tell people at work of their situation or approach their manager and/or Human Resources (HR). We will take this into account when considering how to approach the member of staff and try to support them.
- 7.2 We acknowledge that the types of and impact of domestic abuse may be different for each victim/survivor. We will ensure we do not rush to form a judgement or conclusion. Signs that a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse may include:
- coming to work repeatedly with injuries and the reason for them does not line up with the injury
 - using heavy make-up to cover injuries
 - an unusual number of calls from home and strong reactions to the calls
 - being late for work and needing to leave early
 - not wanting to go home
 - relying on their partner to bring them to work and take them home
 - being secretive about home life
 - being unable to mix with colleagues outside of office hours or for social events
 - frequent absenteeism
 - a drop in the level of their performance or productivity
 - emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous, confused
 - their partner, ex-partner or other family member exerts an unusual amount of control over their life
 - being extremely passive or aggressive
 - seeming chronically depressed or depressed in cycles
 - isolating themselves at work
- 7.3 A key sign is that an employee may begin to behave in an unusual way for them.

8. Support when working at home

- 8.1 We may be in the best possible position as colleagues and managers to check in with someone who is isolated and may be at risk. Domestic abuse signs that may have been spotted by work colleagues will not be as noticeable when working from home.
- 8.2 Many staff members experiencing domestic abuse will have used their work environment as a safe space to access specialist support. If you are working from home, you will need an alternative. For example, you may need information about:
- available online support
 - technical security tips, such as how to hide browser history
- 8.3 A colleague may see indicators of domestic abuse such as visible injuries, broken objects, or damage to the home. However, domestic abuse is so much more than physical abuse. Other things to consider might include:
- changes in behaviour, acting in an unusual way or out of character for them
 - withdrawing from previous sources of support (for example, team chat threads or catch-ups)
 - wariness or anxiety about their partner or a family member coming into the room while you are speaking with them.

- reluctance to talk about their home situation or avoiding answering questions about it.
 - signs of tension, audible conflict in the home, shouting at children or others
- 8.4 None of these things specifically indicate that a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse. However, they may suggest that they are struggling with something and may require help with that issue. It is essential that you explore it with them and identify appropriate support.
- 8.5 Managers should have sufficient structured contact with all their team members, including any absent due to sickness. Contact with a colleague or manager may be an opportunity for someone who is still living with their abuser to have a positive link to the outside world.
- 8.6 Working from home increases the proximity of those in an abusive relationship. If we can offer office space to an employee, it will alleviate some of the household's pressure. It can reduce the risk and hopefully allow us to provide support to a colleague.

9. If both the victim/survivor and perpetrator work for us

- 9.1 Where both the victim/survivor and perpetrator both work for us, we will consider appropriate action. We may include taking steps to protect the victim and perpetrator from:
- working together
 - coming into contact in the workplace
 - having access to information about each other in the workplace

10. Perpetrators of DA who are our employees

- 10.1 We do not condone domestic abuse perpetrated by our employees under any circumstances. We will not treat it as a purely private matter. We recognise that we have a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address abusive behaviour.
- 10.2 We will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic-abuse-related offence on a case-by-case basis, aiming to reduce risk and support change.
- 10.3 We encourage and support employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.
- 10.4 We view the use of violence and abusive behaviour by employees, wherever this occurs, as a breach of our [Code of Conduct](#) and our [Disciplinary Policy](#). This includes if an individual becomes the subject of a Police investigation, or receives a caution or conviction.
- 10.5 If you approach management about your abusive behaviour, we will provide information about services available to you.
- 10.6 We will inform our employees about how to report any concerns confidentially and sensitively, such as through our [Whistleblowing \(Confidential Reporting\) Policy](#). Should they have concerns about a colleague perpetrating domestic abuse.
- 10.7 If you are found to be assisting abusers in perpetrating abuse (for example, giving access to facilities) you may be subject to disciplinary action. If we find that an employee has made malicious allegations about colleagues perpetrating abuse, we will treat it as a disciplinary offence.

11. Notification to Human Resources

- 11.1 We will liaise with Human Resources (HR) to discuss any allegation of Domestic Abuse involving an employee. HR will advise managers whether it is appropriate to contact the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). It is usually the case where there is an offence against a child or vulnerable adult. The DBS has the power to bar individuals from working with specific groups. Any such restrictions could have an impact on an employee's continued employment with us.

12. Equalities considerations

- 12.1 We have completed an equality impact assessment for this policy.
- 12.2 We will provide a variety of ways that employees can talk about domestic abuse to people they feel comfortable with.
- 12.3 We recognise that your experience of domestic abuse may in part be defined by your background, for example, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnic group, immigration status. We will recognise this intersectionality and understand that certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We will consider the individual needs of each survivor when tailoring our approach.
- 12.4 Although domestic abuse can affect anyone, certain people may be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups are affected by specific forms of domestic abuse. We also understand there are cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will take all of this into account in the support we provide.
- 12.5 We will train colleagues to understand how domestic abuse differently affects individuals and work in partnership with specialist providers to act and make sure you get the right support. We will partner with and support local organisations with all relevant experience and understanding to better support survivors' needs.

13. Policy consultation, approval, and review

- 13.1 We have involved employees from our Staff Experience Group and Management Experience Group in development of this policy. The policy has also undergone review from Unison and has been available for review by staff. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as relevant legislation changes.

Appendix A: Domestic Abuse Support Agencies

Organisation	Description of Service	Website	Contact Details
Change, Grow, Live East Sussex (CGL)	CGL offer support to anyone aged 16+ who has been affected by domestic abuse and violence.	https://www.changegrowlive.org/domestic-abuse-service-east-sussex/info	
Refuge from Domestic Abuse	Clarion Housing Association provides safe refuge accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence across East Sussex.	https://www.myclarionhousing.com/help-and-guidance/personal-wellbeing/domestic-abuse-or-violence	referrals.eastsussex@clarionhg.com 0808 2000 247
Safe Space Sussex	Provides an online directory of local victim and witness specialist support services. It also has information about what happens at each stage of the criminal justice system	https://www.safespacesussex.org.uk/	
Survivors Network	The Survivors Network provide the specialist rape and sexual violence abuse service for Sussex	https://survivorsnetwork.org.uk/	01273 203 380
Veritas Justice	Specialist stalking advocacy services for Sussex	https://veritas-justice.co.uk/	01273 234 773
The Suzy Lamplugh Trust	The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the UK's pioneering personal safety charity and leading stalking authority	The Suzy Lamplugh Trust	0808 802 0300 (National Stalking Helpline) https://www.suzylamplugh.org/forms/national-stalking-helpline-enquiry-form
The Alice Ruggles Trust	The Alice Ruggles Trust exists to raise awareness of stalking (including coercive control)	The Alice Ruggles Trust	https://alicerugglesttrust.org/contact
The Hollie Gazzard Trust	The aim of the Hollie Gazzard Trust is to work to save lives by building individual and community resilience to domestic abuse.	The Hollie Gazzard Trust	https://holliegazzard.org/contact-us/ 07538 575229
Paladin: National Stalking Advocacy Service	Assisting high risk victims of stalking in England and Wales.	https://www.paladinservice.co.uk/	+440203 8664107
Hestia	Hestia provides domestic abuse support services in London and the south east, including domestic abuse refuges and community-based support.	Hestia	+44 (0) 20 7378 3100 info@hestia.org.cjism.net
Forced Marriage Unit	Information on how to protect, advise and support victims of forced marriage, including information and practice guidelines for professionals	www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage	020 7008 0151
Galop [LGBTQ+]	Galop has decades of experience in supporting LGBTQ+ people who are victims of domestic abuse.	www.galop.org.uk	0300 999 5428

Switchboard Brighton [LGBTQ+]	Domestic Abuse service is for LGBTQ people affected by domestic abuse. Switchboard provides support to survivors through its Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)	https://www.switchboard.org.uk/what-we-do/domestic-abuse/	01273 359042 helpline@switchboard.org.uk
Friends, Families and Travellers	Supporting individuals and families with the issues and addressing inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people.	https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/	01273 234 777 fft@gypsy-traveller.org
Hersana	Working with Black femmes affected by or at risk of experiencing gender-based violence across England and Wales	https://www.hersana.org/about-us	0333 016 9610 https://www.hersana.org/contact-us
Karma Nirvana	Working to end Honour Based Abuse in the UK	www.karmanirvana.org.uk	0800 5999 247
Respect: Men's Advice Line	The Helpline for male victims of domestic abuse	www.mensadvice.org.uk	0808 801 0327 info@mensadvice.org.uk
Respect: Perpetrator Interventions	Interventions to support perpetrators in the early stages of abuse, and those using high harm behaviours.	https://www.respect.org.uk/	
Men's Aid Charity	Help to provide practical advice and support to men who have been abused	https://www.mensaids.org.uk/	0333 567 0556
Rape Crisis	Provides specialist information and support to all those affected by rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and all other forms of sexual violence and abuse in England and Wales	www.rapecrisis.org.uk	0808 500 2222 rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk
Samaritans	Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. Available for contact 24 hours a day, 365 days a year	www.samaritans.org	116123 jo@samaritans.org
Shelter	Advice and support services offer one-to-one, personalised help with housing issues and homelessness	www.shelter.org.uk	0808 800 4444
Crime Stoppers	Give crime information anonymously	https://crimestoppers-uk.org/	0800 555 111

There are also a variety of apps to download which can help to safeguard a person, such as:

- [Bright Sky](#) - allows users to journal incidents safely, get information on other services available for support
- [Hollie Guard](#) - can track you, tell friends and family you are in danger and record incidents safely

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