



Diocese of Norwich
St Benet's
Multi Academy Trust

[Academy Name]

Domestic Abuse Policy

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Date Issued by MAT:	14/11/2022
Approved By:	Joint Policy Development Committee
Approval Date:	20/10/2022
Review Date:	October 2025
Person Responsible:	Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Changes

The model policy has been revised to reflect these changes to the statutory guidance as outlined below.

Page Ref.	Section	Amendment	Date of Change
		New Policy	Sep 2022

Our Christian Ethos and Values

All policies within the St Benet's Multi Academy Trust (hereafter referred to as "the Trust"), whether relating to an individual academy or the whole Trust, will be written and implemented in line with our Christian ethos and values.

Our academies are open to all and accepting of all regardless of faith. Our passion and ambition are to see children and young people in all our academies achieve excellent educational outcomes alongside developing and growing into their potential as individuals made in the image of God.

Our culture is one of high aspiration for all. This is rooted in our Christian values as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We have a desire to see our academies acknowledged as places of aspiration, high quality learning, achievement and hope making a significant contribution to the communities they serve.

Overall accountabilities and roles

The Trust has overall accountability for all its academies and staff. Through a Scheme of Delegation for each academy it sets out the responsibilities of the Trust, its Executive Officers, the Local Governance Committee and the Principal / Head Teacher. The Principal / Head Teacher of each academy is responsible for the implementation of all policies of the Trust.

All employees of the Trust are subject to the Trust's policies.

Principles and commitment

It is the Trust's policy that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically, and confidentially. This policy also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees will be experiencing domestic abuse and that the workplace should be a place of safety and one that recognises that perpetrators of domestic abuse are responsible for their behaviour and for addressing this.

Through this domestic abuse policy and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we aim to create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. This is in line with our Mental Health approach, that our workplaces are safe spaces to talk about mental health, whilst we work to increase awareness and reduce stigma.

The Trust recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue and undertakes to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment and future development.

This policy is part of the Trust's commitment to family friendly working and seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of the Trust as an employer of choice.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (1996), the Trust recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all staff. Therefore, this policy applies to staff across all sites as well as agency and contract staff (and governors and trustees).

1. Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse are best described as the use of physical and/or emotional abuse or violence, including undermining of self confidence, sexual violence, or the threat of violence, by any person, who is or has been in a close relationship with the victims/survivors, including abuse of parents or adult children. This policy is therefore applicable whatever the nature of the intimate relationship.

1.1 The government definition is:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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 sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional.

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.

Coercive behaviour is 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.

This definition includes stalking and so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

Domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women are most commonly perpetrated by men against women. However, the Trust recognises that controlling and abusive behaviour can also occur in same sex relationships and can be perpetrated by women against men.

All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners.

Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical ability.

Once it has started it often becomes more frequent and more violent.

It can severely affect children emotionally and physically.

Victims/survivors are sometimes beaten or harassed by members of their immediate or extended family.

Domestic abuse is gendered - many perpetrators are men and between 80-95% of those who experience it are women, although it does also occur against men in mixed or same sex relationships.

Domestic abuse is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victims/survivors. On average a victim/survivor of domestic abuse is assaulted 35 times before they report the matter to the police (<https://safelives.org.uk>).

2. Identification of the problem at work

While it is for the individual themselves to recognise, they are a victim/survivor of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim/survivor. These may include the following:

- the member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager
- staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse

- there may be obvious effects of physical abuse (it is important not to make assumptions)
- it may come to light because of enquiries into a drop in performance or a significant change in behaviour
- it may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance or presenteeism - where victims/ survivors prefer to be at work rather than at home.

Ongoing training will be provided across the academies to ensure the Trust has Domestic Abuse Change Champions in all schools.

3. Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.

Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead /Officer (known as Key Adult) prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved.

Information is shared with a school's Key Adult (Designated Safeguarding Lead or Officer) prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

If a child discloses domestic violence at school, this information requires immediate sharing with the school's **Designated Safeguarding Lead**. The child's welfare and interests must be always the paramount consideration.

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Line managers should address the issue positively and with empathy, ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided. If Line managers or other employees want to discuss confidentially any of the above red flags they feel they have identified, please contact the HR Manager Jo Leach to discuss further.

The Trust respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst the Trust strongly encourages victims/survivors of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to.

4. Confidentiality and right to privacy

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

Where domestic abuse in a same sex relationship is disclosed, due regard will be paid to the double disclosure of confidential information if the individual recipient of abuse is not out at work.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees.

In circumstances where the Trust must breach confidentiality, it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, it will discuss with the employee why it is doing so, and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

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/survivors of domestic abuse.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

5. Disclosure of abuse

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to, or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or colleague. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel victims/survivors, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost other organisations.

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

The HR Manager will also provide guidance for line managers and union representatives who are approached by staff who are being abused.

6. Role of colleagues

The Trust encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, the Trust will ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

7. Support for individuals experiencing domestic abuse

The Trust recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and the Trust will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.

If the person reporting domestic violence has children within the Trust, the academy Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed, and the Trust will support the children involved.

The Trust will respond sympathetically, confidentially, and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

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

- special paid leave 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
- redeployment or relocation
- measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- using other existing policies, including flexible working
- access to counselling/support services in paid time
- an advance of pay
- access to courses developed to support female survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme (www.freedomprogramme.co.uk) or assertiveness training.

Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage and should avoid being judgemental. It must be

recognised that the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process.

Other existing provisions (including Occupational Health, and Healthshield) will also be signposted to staff as a means of help.

8. Safety planning

The Trust will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers may have to consider incidents such as violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation, or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator, and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, the Trust will encourage its employee to contact a specialist support agency who can undertake a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence risk assessment- www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk) and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

The Trust will work with the employee and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, considering the duty of care for all employees.

9. Organisational planning

All employees will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisal, leaflets, and posters.

The Trust will support Trade Union activities on raising awareness and tackling the issue of domestic abuse amongst their members.

The Trust will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

10. Training

The Trust is committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of domestic violence and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings, or awareness raising sessions will ensure that all managers are able to:

- identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse
- respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner

- provide initial support - be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
- discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning
- signpost to other organisations and sources of support
- understand that they are not counsellors.

11. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. The Trust recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee approaches the Trust about their abusive behaviour, the Trust will provide information about the services and support available to them and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

The Trust will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- disciplinary action by the employer
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk.

An individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to the organisation's code of conduct policy and procedure. The Trust also reserves the right to consider the use of this policy should an employee's activities outside of work (whether it leads to a criminal conviction) have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute. In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in their current role(s). In these circumstances the possibility of redeployment into an alternative role may be considered.

The Trust views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a **breach of the organisation's code of conduct for disciplinary purposes**.

There may also be circumstances where such behaviour by a regulated professional might indicate a potential risk to children or bring the profession into disrepute or breach a professional code of conduct. Where an employer is aware of such misconduct, they should report it to the appropriate regulator, for example the Teacher Regulation Agency. There may also be a mandatory obligation on the regulated professional to self-refer if they receive any police caution or conviction, and for the police to report such action if they are aware an individual is regulated.

The Trust's code of conduct is intended to inform all staff, irrespective of role, of the standards of conduct expected of them, and to underpin our Christian values. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which staff members are expected to abide. Staff members are always expected to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that:

- allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- all employees will receive guidance and support
- confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know
- investigations will be thorough and independent
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays
- all efforts will be made to resolve the matter within four to six weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

NOTE: This procedure is intended to be safety focussed and supportive rather than punitive.

The alleged perpetrator will be:

- treated fairly and honestly
- helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process
- advised to contact their union

If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, or email then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence and may face Summary Dismissal for Gross Misconduct.

If it becomes evident that an employee has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

12. If the victim/survivor and the perpetrator work in the same organisation

In cases where both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, the Trust will take appropriate action.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or offices.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating domestic abuse in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations appropriate support should be given.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are changes in legislation, best practice, or other organisation policies impact on its effectiveness.

14. Further guidance

Any victim of domestic violence and gain further guidance from

- Norfolk Police - [Domestic Abuse | Norfolk Constabulary](#). Always call 999 if in immediate danger
- Understanding how to support children experiencing domestic violence at home [Home : Operation Encompass](#)
- Norfolk Social services - 0344 800 8020
- Norfolk County Council Housing Advice – 0344 800 8020
- Drug and alcohol advice – see your GP

- GPs and health visitors

Anyone using this policy to respond to a victim/ survivor or perpetrator of domestic abuse should refer to further current information provided by Refuge www.refuge.org.uk. Refuge offers a range of services which give women and children access to professional support whatever their situation.

[Male Victims of Domestic Abuse – Please call 01823 334244 to speak to us confidentially - \(mankind.org.uk\)](#) specialises in helping men escape domestic violence.

[Home | Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](#). You can call the freephone 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247.

15. Links to Other Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Well Being Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staffing Adjustment Policy
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Procedures for All Staff
- Statement of Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff
- Code of Conduct for All Adults
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Equalities and Diversity Policy