



# **DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

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## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 The Trust recognises that some of our staff will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse either as: a survivor of domestic abuse, an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse, someone who has been impacted by a domestic abuse homicide or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse.
- 1.2 The Trust recognises that abuse is unacceptable and a breach of human rights since everyone has the right to live free from fear and abuse. The Trust are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator.
- 1.3 The Trust is committed to reducing domestic abuse and this policy sets out the actions that will be taken in responding to staff who are experiencing domestic abuse and where there are concerns that a staff member may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- 1.4 By developing an effective Domestic Abuse Policy and working to mitigate the risks related to domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and we will also send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. The Trust further recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue.
- 1.5 The Trust has joined the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Abuse to demonstrate its commitment to tackling this issue. The Trust has also signed up to the Work to Stop Domestic Abuse - GMB Staff Charter. Whereby the Trust pledges to support all staff who are victims of domestic abuse.
- 1.6 The Trust wishes to be the employer of choice – it believes that this domestic abuse policy will help it to retain valued staff and improve staff performance and morale.
- 1.7 Definition of domestic abuse for the purposes of the policy this trust recognises the Government’s definition of domestic abuse:  
  
“Any incident of threatening behaviour, abuse or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality”
- 1.8 The Trust recognises that domestic abuse is rarely confined to a single incident and typically forms a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour.

## **2. Scope of the policy**

- 2.1 This policy covers survivors of domestic abuse, current victims of domestic abuse, secondary victims of domestic abuse homicide and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 2.2 This policy covers all staff working at all levels and grades.
- 2.3 The Trust recognises the gendered nature of domestic abuse and recognises 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in the UK have endured in their lifetime. Two women each week and one man each month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner.

- 2.4 However, the Trust also recognises that domestic abuse is experienced in same sex relationships, by men from women partners and by family members.
- 2.5 This policy is therefore applicable whatever the nature of the intimate relationship.
- 2.6 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), this trust recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all our staff and non school staff.

### **3. Confidentiality**

- 3.1 Staff who disclose experiencing or perpetrating abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other staff and non school staff without their permission.
- 3.2 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 staff.
- 3.3 In circumstances where the Trust has to 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 staff why it is doing so and it will seek the staff's agreement where possible.
- 3.4 As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- 3.5 Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.6 Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to be accompanied at meetings by a colleague, trade union representative or a friend.

### **4. Right to privacy**

- 4.1 The Trust respects staff's right to privacy.
- 4.2 Whilst the Trust strongly encourages victims 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 with us if they do not want to.
- 4.3 The Trust does however require perpetrators of domestic abuse to declare any related prosecutions.

### **5. Anti-discrimination**

- 5.1 The Trust will not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development.
- 5.2 If an staff member discloses domestic abuse during disciplinary procedures in relation to performance, absenteeism etc. this will be taken into account.
- 5.3 If it is felt that the issue can be resolved by addressing the support or safety needs of the staff the disciplinary process may be suspended.

## **6. Possible Indicators of Domestic Abuse**

6.1 The following indicators can be signs of possible domestic abuse, although it is important to note these can also be innocent in nature, or caused by other factors such as stress, physical illness, mental health problems or the effects of prescription drugs.

- Coming to work repeatedly with injuries
- An unusual number of phone calls from home and strong reaction to the calls
- Late for work and needing to leave early
- Secretive about home life
- Frequent absenteeism
- Emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous or confused
- Partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life
- Partner makes demands over their work schedule
- May be extremely passive or aggressive
- May seem chronically depressed or depressed in cycles
- May isolate themselves at work

6.2 These are just a few characteristics. People will react in different ways so a more important sign is when an individual behaves in a way that is unusual for them.

## **7. Awareness raising and early intervention**

7.1 This trust will strive to create an environment which is alert to domestic abuse and in which staff feel supported to use confidential mechanisms to disclose experiencing abuse or perpetrating abuse.

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

## **8. Point of contact**

8.1 The following have a critical role as trained members of staff able to offer appropriate responses to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse:

- CEO/Director
- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Director of HR
- HR Business Partner(s)

8.2 The role of the individuals identified above is to:

- Be available and approachable
- Listen, reassure and support
- Respond in a sensitive and non-judgmental manner
- Discuss how the Trust can best support the staff member
- Ensure the staff member knows what options are available to them

8.3 The Trust recognises that some staff may not wish to approach the Trust staff named above and may prefer to involve a third party such as a work colleague or trade union representative.

- 8.4 In such circumstances, the Trust will advise the staff of the difficulties which may arise if the manager is not aware of the relevant facts and circumstances (for instance if there is a potential health and safety issue or if other action is being taken on performance or absence monitoring).
- 8.5 The trust recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and this trust will provide ongoing support for staff who disclose abuse.
- 8.6 The trust will ensure that staff who are victims of domestic abuse are never disciplined because they refused or rejected support and assistance.

## **9. Training**

- 9.1 The Trust is committed to training all line managers on the issue of domestic abuse.
- 9.2 In addition to specific training courses on the issue, it will be integrated into other relevant training courses e.g. performance management.
- 9.3 As a minimum, line managers will be trained to:
- Identify if an staff are experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse
  - Provide initial support - be clear about available workplace support
  - Discuss how the trust can contribute to safety planning
  - Signpost/offer referrals to other organisations
  - Understand that they are not counsellors

## **10. Role of colleagues**

- 10.1 The Trust encourages all staff to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse.
- 10.2 Staff should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person is made aware of this policy and that there is internal and external support available. The line manager should seek advice from HR where the partner of an member of staff is the alleged perpetrator.
- 10.3 Encourage them to talk to domestic abuse contacts in confidence.
- 10.4 Support for survivors of domestic abuse, victims of domestic abuse, staff affected by domestic abuse homicide and staff who are concerned about their abusive behaviour working for the trust do not have to keep their experience to themselves; there is always help and support available.

## **11. Internal & external support**

- 11.1 Sources to help and support staff and managers can be found below:
- Requests for time off;
  - Health Assured Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which provides 24/7 confidential support, advice and guidance including financial advice and support <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>

- Access to additional HR support including payroll and pensions team;
- the [Corporate Alliance against Domestic Abuse](#), a nationally recognised membership charity working with employers to lessen the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace;
- [Respect](#), which provides practical information and advice on domestic abuse for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends;
- [the National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#), which provides advice for those experiencing domestic abuse;
- Government advice and guidance for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of [domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).
- The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. Freephone: 0808 2000 247 [www.nationaldomesticabusehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticabusehelpline.org.uk)
- ManKind: advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse. Helpline (weekdays - 10am-4pm) 01823 334244 [www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims](http://www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims)
- Respect: provide a confidential helpline, email and webchat service for perpetrators of domestic abuse looking for help to stop. They help male and female perpetrators, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Partners or ex-partners of perpetrators, as well as concerned friends and family members and Frontline Workers are also welcome to contact us for information, advice and support. Tel: 0808 802 4040 (weekdays - 9am-5pm). <http://respect.uk.net/information-support/domestic-abuse-perpetrators>

## 12. Safety planning

- 12.1 The Trust will prioritise the safety of the staff member if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 12.2 When an staff discloses domestic abuse, the Trust will work with the staff member and a specialist agency (with the staff members consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues.
- 12.3 A workplace risk assessment should be carried out by the nominated officer, in discussion with the staff and Human Resources on the most how best to effectively support the individual.

## 13. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

- 13.1 Domestic abuse perpetrated by a staff member will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter.
- 13.2 The Trust recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting staff to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.
- 13.3 If an staff member approaches the Trust about their abusive behaviour, the trust will provide information about the services and support available to them.
- 13.4 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.
- 13.5 The Trust may view the use of abuse and abusive behaviour by an staff member, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the Dignity at Work Policy for disciplinary purposes.

13.6 The Trust Dignity at Work Policy is intended to inform all staff and non school staff, irrespective of grade, of the standards of conduct expected of them. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which all staff are expected to abide. Staff are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the Trust and its reputation.

13.7 These procedures may be applicable in cases where an staff member has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened his/her partner or ex partner
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against his/her partner
- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against him/her
- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship

13.8 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 staff will receive guidance and support
- Confidentiality will wherever possible be maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know
- Investigations will be sufficiently independent
- All cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays
- All efforts will be made to resolve the matter within 4-6 weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity

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

13.9 The accused staff member 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 or professional organisations

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

1. A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
2. Disciplinary action by the Trust
3. Providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
4. Identifying risk

13.11 Any staff who is responsible for giving advice or support to those experiencing domestic abuse needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators.

13.12 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, e-mail or social media then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.



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

#### **14. If the victim of the perpetrator works in the same school**

14.1 In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the same school, the Trust will take appropriate action on a cases by case basis.

14.2 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.

14.3 This may include a change of duties for one or both staff member's or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain IT access.

#### **15. Associated Policies**

15.1 All of the Trust's HR policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure they complement and do not restrict the provisions outlined in this policy.

15.2 Where appropriate, the guidance which accompanies this policy will direct the person using the policy to other relevant policies and procedures for example:

- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Appropriate Behaviour at Work Policy
- GMB Union Work to Stop Domestic Abuse Policy

#### **16. Review of policy**

16.1 This Domestic Abuse Policy will be reviewed and amended as required by the Reach South Academy Trust and in consultation with recognised trade unions.

16.2 We will monitor the application and outcomes of this Domestic Abuse Policy to ensure it is working effectively.

## POLICY HISTORY

| <b>Policy Date</b> | <b>Summary of change</b> | <b>Contact</b>              | <b>Implementation Date</b> | <b>Review Date</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| May/June 2020      | Trade Union consultation | All Recognised Trade Unions | N/A                        | N/A                |
| June 2020          | New policy implemented   | HR                          | June 2020                  | September 2023     |
|                    |                          |                             |                            |                    |