**Domestic Violence and Abuse
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)**

This information is intended to raise awareness of the signs of domestic violence and/or abuse and support, employees, workers or volunteers experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse. Managers can obtain further advice from their People Team or UK Volunteering Team, as appropriate.

These FAQ’s support the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

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**1. What is domestic violence and abuse?**Domestic abuse, or domestic violence is any type of controlling, coercive, bullying, threatening, degrading or violent behaviour between people in a domestic or intimate relationship. Domestic abuse isn’t limited to physical violence, it can take a variety of different forms, including sexual, financial, technological or psychological abuse. Some examples include:

* emotional e.g. verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, threats of violence and controlling behaviour;
* financial e.g. controlling finances, withholding money or credit cards, making someone unreasonably account for money spent/petrol used, exploiting assets, withholding basic necessities, preventing someone from working, deliberately running up debts, forcing someone to work against their will and sabotaging someone's job;
* physical e.g. punching, slapping, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair out, pushing, shoving, burning and strangling;
* psychological e.g. includes verbal and non-verbal, a chipping away at an individual’s confidence and independence with the intention of making them compliant and limiting their ability to leave;
* sexual e.g. any situation in which an individual is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse;
* technological e.g. reading emails, checking texts and locations of social media posts, use of spyware or GPS locators.

Whilst there are some examples listed above, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Abuse can happen in many forms, potentially in ways people don’t recognise immediately as a type of abuse. Abuse typically begins subtly, growing in frequency and severity, such as:

### Controlling behaviour - 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.
1. **What are the signs that someone is experiencing domestic violence and /or abuse?**

The Charted Institute for Personnel and Development and Employers Initiative for Domestic Abuse provide the following practical tips in recognising signs of possible domestic violence and/or abuse:

* Look for sudden changes in working patterns/behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work/performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.
* Look for changes in the way an employee dresses, for example wearing excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn. This is obviously not as easy to do with remote working, but could be picked up in video meetings.
* High absenteeism without any explanation.

In addition to the above, you should be aware of the following:

* Signs of physical injury/visible bruising, single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations.
* Spending an increased amount of hours at work for no reason.
* Frequent visits to the workplace by a partner
* Changes in behaviour: for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed etc.
* Change in the use of phones e.g a large number of personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls, texts and emails. During working from home this could present as being difficult to get hold of or regularly having a partner in the room during meetings;
* Conduct out of character with previous behaviour.
* Isolating themselves from colleagues.
* Obsession with timekeeping.
* Secretive regarding home life or give reasons not to turn the camera on when meeting online.
* Worried about leaving children at home.

N.B. Domestic violence and/or abuse may not be the reason for any of the above, so it is important to act sensitively.

**3. What should a manager do if they suspect domestic abuse?**

If domestic abuse is suspected, the manager should facilitate a conversation with the employee, worker or volunteer in order to discuss this and outline what support and help is available. Often individuals will not feel confident in speaking up, so a manager making the first move to begin a conversation can be key (CIPD, 2020). Conversations should be undertaken in a confidential area where the individual feels safe. The manager should be mindful of their tone of voice, demonstrate empathy, create trust and be non-judgemental. Below are some examples of questions that could be used to support the discussion:

* How are you doing at the moment? Is there anything you’d like to discuss with me, related or unrelated to work?
* I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
* Is everything all right at home?
* Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your sickness absence/under-performance at work/arriving late for work, that you would like to discuss with me?
* What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

Managers should keep a confidential record of what has been said and actions taken. Good records may subsequently help in any legal proceedings or disciplinary hearing involving the perpetrator.

1. **What should I do if I think someone is at risk of immediate harm?**

Domestic violence is a crime, if you think someone is experiencing domestic violence and is at risk of immediate harm, please call 999 for the police.

**5. How should you respond to a disclosure (current or past) of domestic violence and/or abuse in a trauma informed way?**

* Believe an employee, worker or volunteer if they disclose experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse – do not ask for proof.
* Reassure the employee, worker or volunteer that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic violence and/or abuse may affect their work performance and outline the support that can be offered and/or accessed.
* Assess any risk to the individual and/or colleagues, identifying and implementing appropriate measures in place to reduce the risk.
* Signpost to source of support (see Appendices A & B within the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy)
* Record the details of what is said as accurately as possible and actions taken.

**6. What support/Workplace adjustments can be put in place to help ensure a safe and supported workplace?**

Barnardo’s has a duty of care to ensure that all employees, workers and volunteers have the right to work/volunteer in a safe environment where risks to health and well-being are considered and dealt with efficiently.

* Where possible, divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee, worker or volunteer is receiving harassing calls.
* Agree with the employee, worker or volunteer what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the alleged perpetrator telephones or visits the workplace.
* Where possible, make arrangements to ensure that the employee, worker or volunteer does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that they have arrangements for getting safely to and from home.
* Consider and discuss whether a change to working patterns or special leave may help to facilitate any practical arrangements.
* Consider whether a change to the persons work location needs to be changed, as for those working from home, escape routes or time apart from an abuser may be dramatically curtailed
* Ensure that there is regular contact arrangements in place with employees working under the Working from Anywhere framework, so that they can raise any concerns or worries, offer support such as flexibility, and signpost them to professional support.
* If an employee, worker or volunteer is looking to live and settle in a new location, consider whether a move of job location/volunteering opportunity could be facilitated, subject to business need.
* Note any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.

**7. What are the signs that someone may be using abusive behaviours?**

Whilst there may be any number of reasons for this behaviour, managers should be aware of the signs that a member of their team may be using abusive behaviours, for example:

* Negative comments made about a partner
* Expressing anger and blaming their partner for issues
* Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner, or if working remotely, referencing their partner’s behaviour
* Repeated injuries such as scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles

Managers who suspect that domestic abuse may be an issue should explore this with the individual. When doing so, they should ensure that their own safety is not compromised. They may take another staff member with them, or meet in a public place.

Managers wishing to seek support can contact the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) via the details on [Inside Barnardos](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/wellbeing/getting-help-wellbeing-health-and-mental-health-issues). In contacting the EAP, they should explain that they are a manager requiring assistance with handling an issue with a member of your team.

**8. What support is available to anyone concerned about their own behaviour?**

For anyone concerned about their own behaviour, the following organisations can provide advice, guidance and support to you:

* Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
* Respect (Freephone) 0808 802 4040, website [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

People Strategy & Projects Team

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