 

**Guide for Managers: Domestic Abuse & BCHC Staff**

Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their employees and that work is a safe space for people experiencing domestic *abuse*. This guide is for Managers where there are concerns relating to a Staff Member is experiencing domestic abuse. The guide details the steps that you can take as a Manager to support the Staff Member and where you can seek additional advice and support. Further information is detailed in the *BCHC Domestic Abuse Support for Staff Workforce Policy*.

**What is Domestic Abuse?**

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a statutory definition of domestic abuse. Anybody over 16 can be a victim and includes partners, ex-partners and family members. Domestic abuse is not just physical or sexual abuse, but can also be emotional abuse, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse.

**Who is affected?**

Figures show that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6/7 men experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Anyone can be the victim of domestic abuse. It can happen to people from all social backgrounds, education levels, nationalities or religion. Domestic abuse is indiscriminate of age, ability level, sexual orientation, employment status, lifestyle or relationship with the abuser.

**Recognising signs of domestic abuse in the workplace**

Everyone should be alert to the possibility that a colleague may be experiencing domestic abuse. Signs can include:

* frequent lateness to work;
* absenteeism without explanation or frequent periods of annual leave taken at short notice;
* repeated injuries or unexplained bruising or explanations that do not fit the injuries;
* mentioning stress at home, or refers to their partner’s anger or temper
* being depressed, anxious, distracted or having trouble concentrating;
* changes in the quality of work performance for no apparent reason;
* unhappiness or signs of fear during pregnancy – a time when abuse often starts or escalates;
* receiving repeated upsetting calls or e-mails or being a victim of vandalism or threats;
* avoiding lunch breaks or socialising outside work
* isolation from friends, relatives or colleagues
* needing time off for appointments
* the employee who has little or no access to resources such as money, debit/credit cards or a car

**What you can do as a Manager if you are concerned a Staff Member is experiencing domestic abuse**

If you have concerns that issues relating to domestic abuse may be having an impact or there are suspicions, consider asking the Staff Member questions in order to ensure the employee is fully supported. Barriers to disclosure are emotional (e.g., fear, embarrassment, shame and self-blame), physical (e.g., partner’s physical presence, controlling behaviour, and manipulation of professionals) and organisational (e.g., appropriateness of setting and time for disclosure). Facilitators to disclosure are interpersonal relations, safety, and validation.

Ensure any discussions with the Staff Member in the workplace are in a private and safe space.

* How are you feeling at the moment? Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
* I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
* Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence / under-performance at work?
* Is everything all right at home?
* You’ve mentioned that you’re scared of your partner. Would you like to tell me more about that?
* I want to ensure you are safe at work and offer you confidential support. Have you ever been emotionally or physically hurt by your partner, ex-partner or a family member?

It is very important that the staff member knows there is help and support available.Employees should not be pressurised into a specific course of action but supported in taking the action they consider most appropriate. Ensure that you:

* Listen and believe what the person is saying. Be sensitive and non-judgemental.
* Validate what they are telling you. e.g. ‘I’m really glad you told me’, ‘this is not your fault’, ‘you do not deserve this’, ‘you are not alone'.
* Never blame the employee for the abuse or excuse the perpetrator’s behaviour or ask them why they have not left or tell them to leave.
* Be aware that there may be additional difficulties faced by the employee because of age, sex, transgender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion/beliefs, disability, pregnancy, or marriage or civil partnership, and respond to these appropriately and sensitively.

**Steps to take following a disclosure**

It is likely that it will take a significant amount of courage for a Staff Member to disclose issues relating to domestic abuse with you as their Manager, therefore the maintenance of trust and confidentiality is crucial to help support the situation. It will however be necessary to inform others where there are safeguarding concerns related to children or adults or where the person is at high risk of serious harm or murder from domestic abuse.

* Ask the Staff Member what they need and be guided by them. They are always the expert in their own life. It is important to be patient and allow them to set the pace.
* Discuss the specific steps that can be taken to help this person stay safe in the workplace. Consider contact with Human Resources if changes needed.
* Provide contact details of Domestic Abuse Services so the Staff Member is aware of the support available through specialist agencies. Allow the Staff Member to use a safe and secure space at work to contact a service.
* Support affected employees to utilise support mechanisms available internally to the Trust i.e. referral to Team Prevent or support through CareFirst (Employee Assistance Programme).
* Ask the employee whether they have children or live with an adult who has care and support needs. This is important as if there is a safeguarding risk to a child or adult then concerns will have to be reported to the relevant local authority children’s services or adult social care services.
* Advise the Staff Member if they are in immediate danger that they contact the Police by calling 999.
* Inform the Staff Member that contact will be made with the BCHC Safeguarding Team to share information and to seek additional support and advice.
* The *BCHC Domestic Abuse Support for Staff Workforce Policy* provides additional information and includes in Appendix 4 a *Staff Domestic Abuse Support Assessment*. This should be completed by you as Manager as part of a supportive discussion with the Staff Member to ensure all relevant factors have been considered.

**Risk in domestic abuse situations**

* Risk in domestic abuse situations is dynamic and can change very quickly. In a small number of cases, victims may be at high risk of serious harm or murder from domestic abuse.
* The Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour-based violence (DASH) risk checklist provides a consistent and simple to use tool to identify those people who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings in order to manage the risk. The Safeguarding Team will provide advice and support to Managers with regards to the use of the DASH risk checklist.

**Advice & Support for Managers**

Advice and support for Managers is available from the Safeguarding Team where a Staff Member is experiencing abuse and also where there are concerns regarding the risks related to a child or adult with care and support needs. The Safeguarding Team can be contacted on 0121 466 7118. When a Manager contacts the Safeguarding Team they will be offered a Microsoft Teams meeting at a convenient time with a Safeguarding Adults and Childrens Practitioner where Think Family concerns are identified.

**Specialist Domestic Abuse Services**

Getting the best possible advice and support is important:

* Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid: 0808 800 0028
* National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
* Men’s Advice Line: 0808 801 0327
* National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 999 5428
* In an emergency call the Police: 999

**What to do if you are concerned a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse**

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| **Recognise** | **Respond** | **Refer** | **Record** |
| A change in behaviour, frequent absences, lateness, distracted, anxious, physical signs. | Start the conversation. Listen and believe what the person is saying. Be sensitive and non-judgemental.  | Support the employee to contact a specialist domestic abuse service.Contact the Safeguarding Team for advice and support.  | As part of a supportive discussion with the Staff Member complete the ***Staff Domestic Abuse Support Assessment*** (Appendix 4 BCHC Domestic Abuse Support for Staff Workforce Policy) . |

**For more information: Domestic Abuse Support for Staff Workforce Policy**

The Domestic Abuse Support for Staff Workforce Policy provides information to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are aware of the support that is available within BCHC. It also provides guidance to line managers when supporting staff who are affected by domestic abuse or are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

<http://nww.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/policies/?entryid18=65882&char=D>