

Domestic Abuse Policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Oxford City Council (the 'Council') recognises that anyone can be affected by domestic abuse as a victim, survivor, witness, or perpetrator, regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, race, or religion.
- 1.2 The Council acknowledges that all forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable, and that for some employees the workplace may be one of the few places which offers routes to safety.
- 1.3 This policy forms part of the Council's commitment to support employee health and wellbeing at work, including those affected by domestic abuse. In addition to reducing physical risks, this means taking all reasonable steps to minimise harm to employees' mental health.
- 1.4 This policy is not contractual and may be amended.

2 Who this policy covers

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees.
- 2.2 The Council will offer support to agency workers, contractors, volunteers and consultants as far as reasonably possible.

3 What this policy covers

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse knows how to access appropriate advice and guidance without fear of stigmatisation or victimisation.
- 3.2 This policy also sets out the steps to be taken when domestic abuse disclosures are made, ensuring all concerns are taken seriously and responded to appropriately. This includes where there are concerns that an employee may be a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

4 Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Lead is responsible for providing advice and guidance to managers and employees on the application of this policy and related procedures.
- 4.2 Domestic Abuse Champions are a point of contact for colleagues who require support and guidance.
- 4.3 Safeguarding Champions are responsible for providing specialist safeguarding support to employees impacted by domestic abuse.
- 4.4 The Head of People is the Council's senior manager to whom any allegations against employees relating to children and/ or vulnerable adults should be reported.
- 4.5 The People Team will work with managers to provide advice and guidance on the practical steps to be taken in relation to anyone affected by domestic abuse.

- 4.6 All employees are responsible for:
- undertaking domestic abuse training appropriate to their role
 - ensuring they are familiar with this policy and the related procedures in place
 - treating all disclosures in relation to domestic abuse seriously and with appropriate confidentiality
 - responding to disclosures using a sensitive, supportive and non-judgmental approach
 - reporting any concerns about colleagues who they become aware are perpetrators of domestic abuse
 - signposting employees to the available internal and external support resources
 - seeking advice from Domestic Abuse Champions, Safeguarding Champions and/ or the People Team as appropriate
- 4.7 Managers are responsible for:
- providing support to team members impacted by domestic abuse whilst also recognising the limitations of their role
 - taking reasonable steps to enable affected employees to remain productive and at work
 - undertaking Risk Assessments to minimise any potential risks following a disclosure of domestic abuse

5 Definition of domestic abuse

- 5.1 The Council adopts the statutory definition of domestic abuse from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 -

Domestic abuse is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse.

Personally connected means two people who:

- are, or have been, married to each other
- are, or have been, civil partners to each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been ended)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been ended)
- are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they have each had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

Children as victims of domestic abuse:

- seeing or hearing, or experiencing the effect of, the abuse and is related to either person
- the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child

- the child and person are related
- child means a person under the age of 18 years
- experiencing psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse

5.2 Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

This includes incidences where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g., a child).

5.3 Economic abuse is: any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

5.4 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.

5.5 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 incorporates harmful traditional practices including, but not limited to, so called 'honour' based violence, 'honour' killings, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

5.6 The Council recognises 'honour-based' abuse as: an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour.

6 Confidentiality

6.1 The Council promotes a culture of respect where disclosures in relation to domestic abuse are held in the strictest of confidence and employee privacy is protected.

6.2 However, there may be occasions when the Council has a duty to disclose information to:

- protect the person experiencing abuse
- prevent harm to someone else (including other employees), or
- prevent or detect a crime.

- 6.3 If an employee is experiencing domestic abuse or is a perpetrator of domestic abuse and has children or there is an adult involved who may be at risk, the Council has a safeguarding duty to protect the child and/ or vulnerable adult.
- 6.4 In these circumstances the Head of People must be notified immediately in line with the Safeguarding Allegations Against Employees Policy.

7 How to raise concerns

If you are affected by domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse Champions

- 7.1 Employees who are experiencing, or have experienced or witnessed, domestic abuse are encouraged to reach out to a Domestic Abuse Champion to discuss any concerns or worries they may have.
- 7.2 Domestic Abuse Champions are frontline staff who receive extensive training and have expert knowledge of the dynamics of domestic abuse and understand the impact.
- 7.3 Domestic Abuse Champions will work with employees to talk through the available options, and provide information and support in a sensitive, non-judgmental manner.
- 7.4 Find the names and contact information for the Council's [Domestic Abuse Champions](#).

Safeguarding Champions

- 7.5 Employees can also contact a Safeguarding Champion in relation to any domestic abuse concern and they will work with them to provide specialist safeguarding support and advice.
- 7.6 Find the names and contact information for the Council's [Safeguarding Champions](#).

Colleagues, Line Managers and the People Team

- 7.7 Employees impacted by domestic abuse may also choose to speak to a trusted colleague, line manager or a member of the People Team at the most appropriate time for them.
- 7.8 The role of anyone receiving a disclosure in relation to domestic abuse is not to advise but to outline the assistance available and signpost to available support resources.

Reporting a concern about a colleague

- 7.9 Any employee who becomes aware that a colleague is a victim of domestic abuse should contact a Domestic Abuse Champion and/ or Safeguarding Champion to discuss how they can provide support.
- 7.10 Anyone who becomes aware that a colleague may be a perpetrator of domestic abuse should follow the procedures for reporting concerns set out in the

Safeguarding Allegations Against Employees Policy.

- 7.11 The confidentiality of anyone seeking support or guidance will be maintained unless they or anyone else is at risk of significant harm.

8 Available support

Reasonable adjustments

- 8.1 Reasonable adjustments may be considered and put in place to manage the impact from domestic abuse at work. Adjustments may include flexible working arrangements, working from home, amending responsibilities and/ or workload, etc.
- 8.2 Line managers should discuss and agree any adjustments with the affected employee.

Employee Assistance Programme

- 8.3 Anyone who raises concerns about their wellbeing or discloses that they are affected by domestic abuse should be provided with the details of the Employee Assistance Programme ('EAP').
- 8.4 The Employee Assistance Programme is a free, confidential service available to employees and their families providing access to support 24 hours a day, any day of the year.

Occupational Health

- 8.5 Occupational Health can provide managers with advice and guidance on supporting employees who are struggling with their physical and/ or mental wellbeing to remain in work or following a period of absence.
- 8.6 Managers must seek consent from the affected employee before making a referral to Occupational Health.

9 Perpetrators who are employees

- 9.1 The Employee Code of Conduct sets out the expectations of all members of staff. Employees should be aware that their conduct outside work may have an impact on their ability to carry out their duties or continued employment.
- 9.2 Action may be taken under the Council's Disciplinary Policy if an employee is convicted of an offence of domestic abuse during their employment or uses Council resources to carry out domestic abuse.
- 9.3 If an employee has concerns about their own behaviour, they are encouraged to seek support and help as soon as possible. If they tell someone at work this will be treated sensitively with the aim of reducing any risks to others, and to assist them to make positive change.
- 9.4 Managers should be supportive if an employee identifies themselves as a perpetrator, seeking advice immediately from the People Team, and carry out a Risk Assessment to mitigate any associated risks.

- 9.5 Where both the perpetrator and victim/ survivor of domestic abuse are employees, changes may be made to their working arrangements. These measures are to protect and provide support to both parties and are not intended to pass judgment.

10 External support and guidance

- 10.1 If employees don't feel ready or able to speak to someone at work about domestic abuse, they can access help and support from a range of external agencies. including:
- [Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service](#) on 0800 731 0055
 - 24 hour [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) on 0808 2000 247
 - [Reducing the Risk](#)
 - [Mensadviceline.org.uk](#) on 0808 8010327
- 10.2 Employees who are concerned about their own actions or behaviour can contact the [Respect Phonenumber](#) on 0808 8024040.

11 Monitoring and review

- 11.1 This document will be reviewed regularly and updated if there are significant changes required in light of best practice or legislation and government guidance.

12 Relationship with other policies and procedures

- 12.1 The Council will regularly review and update policies, procedures and practices that are linked to domestic abuse, and this document should be read in conjunction with the following:
- Safeguarding Allegations Against Employees Policy and Guide
 - Employee Code of Conduct
 - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
 - Attendance Management Policy and Procedure
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure
 - Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

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