

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Introduction and scope

1. The University of Suffolk is committed to deconstructing myths and misconceptions to provide effective support for victims/survivors.
2. Domestic abuse can affect anyone irrespective of sex, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality and disability. However, it is widely recognised that domestic abuse is a gendered crime involving a disproportionate number of female victims/survivors and can happen in all types of relationships involving a “personal connection”¹. Although University of Suffolk recognises that the majority of victims/survivors of abuse are female, this policy includes a gender-neutral definition of domestic abuse to ensure that all victims/survivors are included.
3. The University recognises that students and employees are likely to be affected by domestic abuse; for example as a victim/survivor of domestic abuse, an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse, someone who has been impacted upon by domestic abuse or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse. The overarching aim of this policy is to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff and students within the University of Suffolk community.

Scope

4. We 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. The University has developed this policy to support our staff and students’ health and wellbeing, specifically in relation to issues around domestic abuse.
5. The aims are to:
 - Raise awareness of the issue of domestic abuse to all members of the university
 - Improve recognition and support for those who are victims of domestic abuse
 - Support awareness raising and inform cross-institutional training needs
 - Engender a culture of openness without fear of discrimination
 - Develop a point of contact for staff and students who is trained in the internal and external support for victims of domestic abuse
 - In some cases, to support appropriate action against those accused of perpetrating domestic abuse

¹ Domestic Abuse Act (2021) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

6. We recognise that domestic abuse is rooted in social inequality and will not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse in terms of current employment or future development. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)² and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992)³, the University recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all students and employees. This policy supports the University's Flexible Working Policy⁴ and seeks to benefit the welfare of individuals, retain valued employees, improve morale and performance, and enhance the reputation of University of Suffolk for student support and as an employer of choice. This policy supports University of Suffolk's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct⁵ and Dignity at Study Procedure and will be closely linked to statutory guidance published.

DEFINITION AND IDENTIFICATION

What is domestic abuse?

7. Domestic abuse encompasses a number of abusive behaviours perpetrated by one person towards another. Both parties should be aged over 16 and are, or have been previously, personally connected to each other in some way. This may be through an intimate personal relationship, current, former or proposed marriage or civil partnership, shared parental responsibility for a child or a familial relationship (relatives). The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) states that abusive behaviour can be a single incident, but is often a pattern of behaviour taking many forms. This may incorporate:

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

8. 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.

² HM Government (1974) Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

³ HM Government (1992) Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1992/2051/contents/made>

⁴ University of Suffolk (2019) Flexible Working Policy. Available from: <https://www.uos.ac.uk/media/uniofsuffolk/website/content-assets/documents/pod/flexible-working/Flexible-Working-Policy---March-2022.pdf>

⁵ University of Suffolk (2019) *Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct*. Available from: <https://www.uos.ac.uk/media/uniofsuffolk/website/content-assets/documents/policies-and-procedures/Safeguarding-Policy-and-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

9. 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 'so called' honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.⁶ Controlling and coercive behaviours became a criminal offence under the Serious Crimes Act (2015).

10. For those attempting to leave or separate from an abusive relationship, a pattern of stalking or harassment may emerge. In the context of domestic abuse, harassment may include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications or contact as well as malicious assertions upon a victim in a manner that would cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

11. Stalking behaviour can include following a person, watching or spying on them or forcing contact with them through any means, including social media. The effect of such behaviour is to curtail a victim's freedom, leaving them feeling that they constantly have to be careful. In many cases, the conduct might appear innocent (if it were to be taken in isolation), but when carried out repeatedly (a course of conduct), it may then cause significant alarm, harassment or distress to the victim. The Protection from Harassment Act (1997) provides protection from harassment and stalking in a wide range of contexts.

12. University of Suffolk also recognises online and digital platforms and social media are increasingly being used to perpetrate domestic abuse, coercion and control. The University of Suffolk takes all forms of domestic abuse seriously including technology-facilitated abuse. The University of Suffolk will draw on the Online Safety Policy⁷ to provide further guidance around this matter.

Identification of the problem

13. Whilst it is for the individual themselves to recognise that they are a victim/survivor of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate a person may be a victim. An indicative list of signs is in Appendix 1 and further resources can be found on the university intranet or Student Hub..

14. It is essential to understand that any of the signs indicating a person may be a victim could

⁶ Home Office (2013) *Circular 003/2013: new government domestic violence and abuse definition*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-government-domestic-violence-and-abuse-definition/circular-0032013-new-government-domestic-violence-and-abuse-definition>

⁷ University of Suffolk (2020) Online Behaviour Policy. Available from: <https://www.uos.ac.uk/media/uniofsuffolk/website/content-assets/documents/policies-and-procedures/Online-Behaviour-Policy.pdf>

arise from a range of circumstances, of which domestic abuse may be one.

DISCLOSURE

Disclosure of Domestic Abuse - Employees

15. Employees subject to domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or colleague, for example. Line managers, colleagues and union representatives will not counsel victims, but offer information, workplace support, signpost to specialist organisations and undertake a safeguarding referral, where applicable. It is important to ensure that any practice refers to and is aligned with University of Suffolk's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct⁵ or equivalent policy at partners campuses.

16. University of Suffolk will be approachable and available to respond confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse. A member of People and Organisational Development Department, Designated Safeguarding Officer (or equivalent at partners) may be a further point of contact for staff experiencing domestic abuse or line managers who have been approached by staff who are being abused.

Disclosures of Domestic Abuse - Students

17. Students experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report or seek support from a student union representative, adviser within the Student Life Department or equivalent, a course representative, within an Extenuating Circumstances application, or peer. Peers, students, advisers and representatives should be encouraged to signpost to Domestic Abuse Champions and may undertake an assessment and safeguarding referral, if appropriate. For example, a peer can seek advice from a Domestic Abuse Champion, who can take action to refer the allegation. It is important to ensure that any practice refers to and is aligned with University of Suffolk's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct⁵ or equivalent policy at partner campuses. Where a disclosure is made through a University process, such as an application for extenuating circumstances staff should report this to the safeguarding team.

18. University of Suffolk will be approachable and available to respond confidentially and effectively to any student who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse. A Domestic Abuse Champion, or person / agency trained in domestic abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional supportive contact for students. This person will also provide guidance for lecturers and student union representatives who are approached by students who are being abused.

Referral and Reporting to University Safeguarding Officers

19. The University encourages all employees and students to report if they are aware an

individual is subject to or perpetrating abuse. Victims/survivors can also refer or report to a Safeguarding Officer at their campus for support and referral to specialist agencies.

20. To make a referral email safeguarding@uos.ac.uk or telephone 01473 338400 and select the option 'safeguarding' to speak with a Safeguarding Officer based at the Ipswich Campus. Ipswich Safeguarding Officers will liaise with Partner Safeguarding Officers where students attend other campuses.

Domestic Abuse Champion

21. A number of staff within the University have received Domestic Abuse Champion⁸ training and Safeguarding Officers can appoint a Domestic Abuse Champion to support a case, as appropriate. Domestic Abuse Champions are trained to:

- Recognise the signs, symptoms and dynamics of domestic abuse
- Realise the impact domestic abuse has on the individual, family and wider society
- Offer a consistent response to domestic abuse and identify support which is rooted in the local Suffolk community.
- Respond in a professional manner giving victims the tools to stay safe, take action to reduce harm and get the right support promptly

22. Domestic Abuse Champions are part of a wider Domestic Abuse Champion Network, which contributes to increasing awareness of domestic abuse in agencies and organisations where people may ask for help. Domestic Abuse Champions are supported by Domestic Abuse Champion Coordinators who can provide specialist advice to champions.

SUPPORT

Responses

23. Anyone supporting a victim or survivor around Domestic Abuse should demonstrate understanding that it is difficult for individuals to disclose domestic abuse:

- Believe the individual
- Reassure the individual
- Be sensitive, non-judgemental, practical, supportive and discrete
- Find time and a private space to listen
- Prioritise safety
- Do not attempt to contact the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator
- Provide support, guidance and signposting

⁸ Suffolk Domestic Abuse Champions Network (n.d.) Suffolk Domestic Abuse Champions Network. Available from: <https://ipswichandeastsuffolkccg.nhs.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mEYXpOb0Pcl%3D&tabid=1461&portalid=1&mid=5531>

- Do not compel the individual to share or accept information should they not wish
- Call 999 if the individual is in immediate danger

Confidentiality and right to privacy

24. We all have a responsibility for reporting any suspicions or concerns of abuse and for ensuring that concerns are taken seriously. Individuals will refer to the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct (or equivalent policy at partners) regarding confidentiality and record keeping. It is important information is treated with the utmost confidence and the University respects an individual's right to confidentiality. However, where there are safeguarding concerns about children, adults at risk or where University of Suffolk must act to protect the safety of students and employees, individuals must follow the protocols set out in the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct⁵ (or equivalent policy at partners) and seek advice from the University's Designated Safeguarding Officers or Partner Safeguarding Officer.

Support for Employees and Students

25. The University recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process, not an event and as such, therefore the University and Union/Professional organisation representatives will work together cooperatively to tackle domestic abuse and support victims/survivors.

26. University of Suffolk will refer to the domestic abuse toolkit developed by Business in the Community, in association with Public Health England (2019)⁹ which outlines specific actions for employers to provide support to victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The main principles involve:

- Recognise*- Enable individuals to openly discuss this topic and provide a supportive workplace.
- Respond* - Review our processes to ensure that we are providing a supportive workplace and can respond to disclosure.
- Refer* - Provide access to organisations who can help individuals affected by domestic abuse.
- Record* - It is important to record the details of what is said as accurately as possible Should the abuse become subject to criminal proceedings, this is an exhibit and should be given to the police.

27. Where domestic abuse has been reported, more specific University support can be provided, but are not limited to the following ways:

- Unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping are viewed sympathetically.
- Special paid leave for employees and permitting student leave to attend relevant

⁹ Business in the Community and Public Health England (2019). *Domestic Abuse Toolkit*. Available: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/domestic-abuse-toolkit/>

appointments, including with support. agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.

- Temporary or permanent changes to times and patterns of attendance.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser.
- Redeployment or relocation.
- Measures to ensure a safe environment.
- Using other existing policies,
- Access to counselling/support services.
- Signposting and guidance to specialist services.

Support and safety planning

28. The University will prioritise the safety of individuals if they make it known that they are subject to domestic abuse. When an individual discloses domestic abuse, University of Suffolk will encourage and signpost contact to a specialist support agency (or suitably trained specialist individual) who can undertake a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

29. University of Suffolk will work with the individual and the specialist agency to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety at university and at home as well as address any risks there may be to other people.

Support for individuals who are marginalised and people of the Global Majority

30. Although domestic abuse affects individuals from all ethnic groups and multiple communities, the form the abuse takes may vary and there may be additional barriers to inclusion, support and services. For example, people of the Global Majority's experiences may be compounded by racism and this may affect their ability to seek help from statutory agencies, such as the police and social care. There also may be many myths and stereotypes which exist around marginalised communities, which minimise victim/survivor experiences and contribute towards maintaining the hidden nature of domestic abuse. Marginalised individuals may have already experienced prejudice, sometimes repeatedly in their lifetime because of inherent socio-economic and structural inequalities. Consequently, support needs to take account of the diverse nature of experiences and recognise how social dimensions such as ethnicity, gender, class, disability and sexual orientation intersect with multiple layers of oppression. Victim/survivors are not homogenous. They will have widely differing identities and as such, it is important that support seeks to understand and respond to their unique needs.

If the victim and the perpetrator are located in the same organisation

31. In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse are located in the organisation, University of Suffolk will take appropriate action such as safety planning. For example, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the university. Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor. For employees, this may include a change of duties or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices. The potential for disciplinary action against the person who is perpetrating abuse will be considered in light of any active external investigation i.e., Police investigation.

32. The University encourages all employees and students to report if they are aware an individual is subject to or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence and students should speak to an adviser in the Student Life Department or equivalent, about their concerns. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague or student, it is important that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

33. Domestic abuse will not be condoned under any circumstances. University of Suffolk recognises our role in encouraging and supporting individuals to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds. Employees and students should report if they are aware an individual is a perpetrator of abuse.

34. If an individual approaches University of Suffolk about their abusive behaviour, they will be signposted to specialist services, who will provide information about the services and support available to them. University of Suffolk 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. In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue with certain activities or duties, in their current role(s) or attend a current course, due to a caution or conviction.

35. As far as reasonably practicable the University of Suffolk will engage with perpetrators in a constructive way to increase safety and support abusers to recognise that they require help to change their violent and abusive behaviour. These procedures can be applicable in cases where an individual has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner.

- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them.
- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship.

36. University of Suffolk 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 individuals will receive guidance and support.
- Confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who need-to-know whilst following safeguarding protocols.
- Investigations will be thorough and impartial.
- Steps will be taken to mitigate further risks to the victim/survivor and other people
- All cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

37. This procedure is intended to be safety focussed and supportive rather than punitive and 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, student union or professional organisation.

38. There are five potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- Identifying risk*
- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence.*
- Potential for disciplinary action.*
- Providing specialist, safety-focused counselling.*
- Referral to Local Authority regarding risk to general public/vulnerable people.*

39. Any individual who is responsible for giving advice, or who comes into contact with, or supports vulnerable people or children and therefore may be in a position of trust need to be particularly aware of the potential actions the University may be required to take (see paragraphs 39-42).

40. If a member of staff or student is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as University platforms, student or personnel record systems, social media channels, telephones or email for example, then they may also be

subject to a disciplinary procedure.

41. If it becomes evident that an employee or student has made a malicious allegation that another person is perpetrating abuse, then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken. Please note that a malicious allegation differs from an unsubstantiated allegation, whereby no action will be taken.

Risk Management in Positions of Trust

42. University of Suffolk has a clear safeguarding policy in line with the [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#) for dealing with allegations against people who work with children or in a position of trust.

43. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children or in a position of trust who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or adult at risk.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or adult at risk.
- Behaved towards a child, children or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.

44. Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) as well as Position of Trust (POT) teams manage and oversee individual cases. The LADO or POT team provides advice and guidance to University of Suffolk, liaises with the police and other agencies and monitors the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

45. The LADO within the relevant Local Authority should be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to be known or that are made directly to the police.

ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING AND TRAINING

46. All individuals will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods for example, induction, training, appraisal, intranet, leaflets and posters. University of Suffolk is committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse through training, briefings or awareness raising sessions which will ensure that all individuals are able to:

- Identify if an individual is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse.
- Respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner.
- Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning.

- Signpost to other organisations and sources of support.
- Understand that their role is not to be a counsellor or support worker.

Appendix 1: Signs¹⁰

Signs that someone might be experiencing domestic abuse (some of these signs may reflect a range of sensitive issues):

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| Changes in behaviour and work productivity signs: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the person's working patterns: for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early. • Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards. • Change in the use of the phone/email: for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails. • Leaving work in a hurry particularly after a stressful communication on the phone. • Spending an increased amount of hours at work or working for no reason (presenteeism). • Changes in behaviour or demeanour • Conduct out of character with previous employment history. • Changes in behaviour: for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed etc. • Isolating themselves from colleagues / peers. • Obsession with timekeeping. • Secretive regarding home life and relationship. • Worried about leaving children at home with their partner / family member. |
| Emotional and physical signs: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tearful and detached from colleagues/peers • Angry or emotional outbursts • Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations. • Issues around mobility (limping, sitting awkwardly) • Taking a large amount of pain relief • Change in the pattern or amount of make-up used. • Change in the manner of dress: for example, clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries. • Substance use/misuse. • Fatigue/sleep disorders. |
| Other signs: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current or former partner or family member harassing or stalking a fellow colleague or peer. • Current or former partner or family member exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule. • Limited access to money and concern around finances. • Lack of freedom to make own decisions without checking. |

¹⁰ Department of Health and Safelives (n.d.) *Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse: Practical guidance for line managers, Human Resources and Employee Assistance Programmes*. Available from: <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/DV%20Employer%27s%20guidance%20FINAL%20Update%203%20-%20SafeLives%20rebranded.pdf>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flowers/gifts sent to employee for no apparent reason.• Isolation from family/friends• Monitoring of social media profiles or emails, abuse over social media such as Facebook or Twitter, sharing intimate photos or videos without your consent, using GPS locators or spyware. |
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