



WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
ASHURST CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL
SCHOOL LANE, ASHURST, WEST SUSSEX, BN44 3AY



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Policy on Supporting Staff Experiencing Domestic Abuse

1. Aim

The school recognises that domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on staff and their families and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of its staff.

The school will provide a non-judgmental and supportive environment to employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. We will treat any information sensitively and in the strictest confidence, avoiding victim blaming.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff who have experienced domestic abuse receive the right response from their employer in line with legislation and best practice. The policy aim is to promote safety and to empower colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse to act.

The policy sets out:

- Definitions of domestic abuse, its impacts, and how to respond when it occurs.
- A framework of support to employees experiencing domestic abuse, for identifying abuse early, and providing support effectively.
- The West Sussex County Council and School's role in challenging and addressing abusive behaviour.
- Guidance to headteachers/line managers on how to identify the signs of domestic abuse, to respond safely and offer appropriate support to employees.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all school-based staff on permanent, temporary, and fixed term contracts, from their first day of employment.

This policy does not apply to agency workers whose employment policies will be defined by their agency. However, the school is committed to supporting all colleagues at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse.

3. Accessibility

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact HR Policy Queries by sending an email to: HRPolicyQueries@westsussex.gov.uk 2

4. Introduction

The school recognises that staff, like any individual, could be affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse. According to the [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#), nationally 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience abuse by an intimate partner. More than a quarter of trans people in relationships report to have experienced domestic abuse.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA) occur in all groups and sections of society affecting people regardless of race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, religion or belief, culture or class and occurs in both heterosexual and non-heterosexual relationships.

Both women and men can be victims, although women and girls experience these forms of violence and abuse disproportionately and cumulatively during their lifetime.

DSVA can have a significant impact on individuals' mental, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing and can lead to deterioration in work performance through increased sickness absence, timekeeping problems, and reduced productivity.

As an employer, the school has a duty of care to its employees. This means the school must do all it reasonably can to support health, safety, and wellbeing including making sure the working environment is safe and in ensuring that mental and physical health are treated as equally important.

The school is committed to having a workplace culture in which employees experiencing forms of abuse feel able to speak up and seek help and support, and within which sexist, harassment or abusive behaviours from other employees are not accepted.

Where it is alleged, an employee has, or is, perpetrating any form of abuse, sexist, harassment, or abusive behaviour, such matters will be taken seriously and addressed through the Behaviour In The Workplace and Disciplinary Policy as appropriate.

This Policy sets out the schools' framework for supporting employees who have experienced, or are experiencing, DSVA.

5. Definitions

The school recognises the statutory definition of domestic abuse ([Domestic Abuse Act](#)) which identifies that abusive behaviour is seen as relating to two parties aged 16 or over who are "personally connected" (for example, are or were, in an intimate relationship).

Abuse could include physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, and economic, psychological, or emotional abuse.

A person who is currently, or has previously, been subjected to domestic abuse, is sometimes referred to as either a survivor or the victim.

The school refers to the person whose behaviour is abusive to the survivor as the person causing harm.

Domestic abuse is characterised by an individual's abusive behaviour that uses coercive actions as a means of controlling a survivor. Being subjected to domestic abuse is not the fault of the survivor or their children.

6. Responsibilities for the Policy

Coordinated Response

The safety of survivors, their children, colleagues, other children in the school and the wider public are of concern to the school when responding to domestic abuse.

Responding safely to domestic abuse requires a coordinated approach to responses and decisions. When the school receives disclosures that a member of staff is experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse, different West Sussex County Council (WSCC) departments will be involved to assist and support.

The specific roles and responsibilities of school staff and WSCC are set out below.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at the school will provide a leadership culture in which survivors do not feel judged, blamed, or penalised for their experience of domestic abuse and the impact it may have on their work.

SLT will ensure that there are resources in place, including mandatory training on domestic abuse for all school employees, to ensure they are aware of the provisions within this policy.

WSCC have teams that can ensure appropriate training is in place for staff involved in responding to domestic abuse including safeguarding teams and Human Resources and for ensuring providers such as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health are equipped to support the needs of staff who are experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse.

The Role of Headteachers/Line Managers

Headteachers/line managers are instrumental in ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of staff and may often be best placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse or provide the first line of support to employees.

Headteachers/line managers should seek to build trusting relationships with team members in order to provide a work environment that encourages individuals to share concerns when they arise.

Headteachers/line managers will need to pay attention to signs of domestic abuse to allow early intervention. Where concerns arise, headteachers/line managers will need to:

- Treat all domestic abuse situations seriously, deal with them confidentially where possible and with discretion and ensure the policy is applied consistently to staff regardless of any protected characteristics.
- Build awareness of this policy and the help and support available.

The Role of Specialist Safeguarding Services

WSCC Safeguarding Services can provide information and guidance about safeguarding responses for adults and children in relation to domestic abuse concerns.

Record keeping

Security of information related to domestic abuse is an essential part of an effective and safe domestic abuse response. Unsafe information sharing or storage may result in an escalation in risk to the safety of a survivor and their children.

Records about domestic abuse must be kept confidentially including absences related to domestic abuse. If the Headteacher/line manager becomes aware of domestic abuse, a file note will be recorded for monitoring and safeguarding purposes. The most appropriate place to keep these records is within line management confidential supervision notes. Where information is shared with HR then they will hold their own confidential records.

Headteachers/line managers can contact:

- [The Integrated Front Door](#) for Children's Services;
- [The Safeguarding Adults Hub](#) for concerns relating to adults with care and support needs;
- [WORTH Services](#) for advice on high-risk domestic abuse cases.

These services will fulfil the following requirements:

- To support school colleagues in responding to domestic abuse.
- To ensure information systems for documenting and monitoring staff domestic abuse are safe and effective.

- To participate in the Domestic Homicide Review process for cases that involve a member of school staff.
- To contribute to maintaining the school's domestic abuse training.

Support from the HR Business Partner Education Team

The HR Business Partner Education Team work alongside headteachers/line managers and WORTH Services to ensure support is provided to staff experiencing domestic abuse.

In some situations, a survivor may make a disclosure to the HR Business Partner Education Team who will need to consider linking them to appropriate internal and external support services.

In addition, the HR Business Partner Education Team will consider domestic abuse matters in relation to employment policy and practice development, in contracting with providers (e.g., EAP and Occupational Health), and in developing training for headteachers/line managers.

Reviewing and improving practice

The Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing oversees WSCC's Domestic Abuse Strategic Group. This group leads on the development and review of the Council's domestic abuse strategic framework.

The group works with key colleagues, including the HR Business Partner Education Team, to review themes and learning from the application of this policy and make recommendations for future development.

Any referral to Children's Services, the Safeguarding Adults Hub, or WORTH Services will result in a Mosaic record being created.

7. Approaches to domestic abuse

Identifying Survivors

Being aware of the potential indicators of domestic abuse is important in identifying survivors. This section sets out potential indicators of domestic abuse and sources of additional information.

Women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. They are more likely to experience sustained physical, psychological, or emotional abuse, controlling and coercive behaviour, or violence which results in injury or death.

It is important to note however that people of all genders may experience domestic abuse. The organisation Mankind provides information about [male victims of domestic](#)

[abuse](#). Galop provides information regarding domestic abuse within the [LGBTQ+ community](#).

Staff may be caring for partners or family members who are older people. Domestic abuse perpetrated by older people is often recorded incorrectly as elder abuse or not recognised as domestic abuse ([older people and domestic abuse](#) and [more needs to be done to support older people](#)).

A domestic abuse survivor may not ask for help due to feelings of isolation, fear of not being taken seriously, myths and stereotypes about domestic abuse, including victim blaming. Concepts of shame linked to religious or cultural beliefs can also affect a survivor's willingness and confidence to ask for help. However, colleagues may spot signs indicating domestic abuse. These may include:

- **Attendance:** Absences from work, lateness, needing to leave work early due to stress and anxiety.
- **Working Patterns:** Presenteeism, excessive working hours, avoiding annual leave, may indicate a person preferring to be at work rather than at home.
- **Performance:** Deterioration in performance and productivity.
- **Behaviour:** Changes in a colleague's behaviour, for example, crying, appearing stressed, anxious, depressed, distracted, withdrawn or quiet and expressing low self-esteem.
- **Communication:** Changes in the way they communicate, for example, making many personal calls or texts and reacting strongly to personal calls.
- **Physical:** Visible physical indications such as unexplained or frequent bruises or injuries. In some cases, a person subjected to domestic abuse may wear excessive clothing to cover these indicators.

Such signs may arise from a range of circumstances, so it is important not to make assumptions but to have conversations to check a colleague's wellbeing and to obtain more information.

Headteachers/Line Managers Identifying Concerns

Headteachers/line managers hold regular supportive one-to-one meetings with members of their team. This should provide individuals with a safe and confidential space to discuss or disclose personal concerns and may also provide opportunity for the Headteacher/line managers to identify and explore concerns regarding domestic abuse.

The school respects people's right to privacy and staff will not be forced to share private information. However, if a Headteacher/line manager believes that a member of staff is experiencing domestic abuse, they should discuss this with the person concerned to understand their situation better and initiate support if required.

If a Headteacher/line manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a conversation to be able to discuss this and offer support. Ignoring or shying away from the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. Often employees will not feel confident in speaking up, so a Headteacher/line manager making the first move to begin a conversation can be critical in providing a first step in support.

Before undertaking such a conversation, the Headteacher/line manager may find it helpful to consult WORTH Services and the HR Business Partner Education Team for advice on preparing for the conversation.

The role of a Headteacher/line manager is to make clear that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available and to provide guidance and signposting on how further support can be obtained. The Headteacher/line manager cannot deal with the abuse itself but can ensure the employee has access to advice and options on how to deal with the matter.

Headteachers/line managers should discuss such issues positively and sympathetically ensuring that the member of staff is able to disclose concerns.

Colleagues Identifying Concerns

If staff become concerned that a colleague might be experiencing domestic abuse, staff may be able to discuss their concerns with that person and encourage them to speak to their Headteacher/line manager. In some circumstances, an employee may find it more appropriate to consider talking to their Headteacher/line manager rather than approaching the individual concerned.

A concerned employee may also seek advice from WORTH Services if they are unsure about whether to approach an individual, or to raise a concern with their Headteacher/line manager.

Individuals Disclosing Domestic Abuse

Staff disclosing domestic abuse will be treated supportively, and disclosures will be taken seriously. For their safety and workplace support, staff are encouraged to inform their Headteacher/line manager if they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where a disclosure is made to a Headteacher/line manager, the Headteacher/line manager will ensure that they are offered support. This may include signposting or connecting with specialist teams within WSCC, external organisations who can offer support, and raising aware of this policy.

Headteacher/line managers will not be able to resolve the problem for the individual, but they will be able to connect to support and explore safety planning.

Appendix 2 provides details of specialist domestic abuse resources.

The school recognises that a person subjected to domestic abuse may be reluctant to talk about personal issues with the people they work with.

If a staff survivor of abuse prefers not to disclose domestic abuse to their employer, they can find support by calling the freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or contacting a local specialist service (Appendix 2).

If a member of staff is in immediate danger, they should contact the police by ringing 999.

A member of staff may prefer to make a disclosure to another manager other than their direct line manager, in which case the same level of support and signposting will be provided.

Other ways of disclosing abuse in confidence are:

- **Other managers:** individuals who do not feel able to speak to their direct line manager or Headteacher may consider speaking to another manager within the school, or a member of the Governing Body.
- **WORTH Services:** [Contact Details for WORTH Services](#)
- **Human Resources:** individuals who feel unable to talk to their Headteacher or line manager may contact Human Resources to seek support and signposting.
- **Trade Unions:** members of a trade union may seek confidential advice and support from their trade union. The Trade Union may be able to provide support, offer signposting, and support the individual to make a disclosure to the school if appropriate.

8. Support for Survivors

The school will provide support for employees who are survivors of domestic abuse and will work with them to establish what support would be beneficial.

Headteachers/line managers need to be open to different ways of supporting individuals and the survivor's views should be central to planning and decision making. Support offered to survivors may include:

- Signposting to this policy.
- Signposting to support services in the local area via [Safe Space Sussex](#)
- Signposting to support including specialist domestic abuse services (see appendix 1) and the Employee Assistance Programme.

- A discussion with the survivor to consider support needs and safety considerations such as abusive partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation, or harassment by the person causing harm.
- A risk assessment and individual support and safety plan, with the support of WORTH Services and the HR Business Partner Education Team.
- Special leave as outlined in the schools Guidance on Other and Discretionary Leave.
- Return to work discussions with headteachers/line managers following absences to discuss a survivor's support needs.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working patterns.
- Changes to specific duties to avoid contact with the person causing harm.
- Measures to improve safety at school, for example, changes to work email address and phone number to avoid harassment.

9. Referrals and Confidentiality Considerations

The school recognises the importance of discretion and confidentiality in reducing fear of disclosure.

The school recognises that the fear of disclosure may be heightened within some groups of people and influence their decision to come forward. For example, disclosure from a member of the LGBTQ+ or neurodivergent community may involve revealing additional sensitive personal information and/or create concern regarding heteronormative assumptions about abuse. The school recognises that people with disabilities are proportionally more likely to experience domestic abuse but can have additional barriers to overcome when disclosing abuse.

Where headteachers/line managers and colleagues are responding to domestic abuse, they have a responsibility to exercise discretion and sensitivity. Survivors may be afraid of the consequences of information sharing and should be reassured that information will only be shared where it is necessary to support safety and risk mitigation.

Where there are safeguarding issues concerning children or adults at risk, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Where a member of staff is at risk of harm, the school has a duty to share information without consent under the [Public Interest Disclosures Act 1998](#).

Where a Headteacher/line manager or a colleague or Human Resources have concern for the safety of an employee, or for any child or adult at risk, in connection with domestic abuse they can seek initial advice from WORTH Services to explore the risk further. The matter can be discussed with WORTH Services anonymously in the first instance (i.e., without disclosing the identity of the individual concerned). Before disclosing individual details to WORTH Services, consent should be obtained from the member of staff prior to making contact where possible.

WORTH Services may advise that a referral must be made to Children's Safeguarding via the Integrated Front Door or to the Safeguarding Adults Hub for adults with care and support needs, i.e. where their ability to manage daily life is significantly affected and additional support is required.

Any referral received by Children's Safeguarding or the Safeguarding Adults Hub which references an alleged criminal matter will automatically be shared with the police in line with statutory safeguarding procedures.

Where a referral is made, the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) service may contact the survivor, although the individual will be under no obligation to engage with the IDVA service if this is not wanted.

In any other circumstance, survivor consent should be sought before sharing information where possible. A decision to share information without survivor consent must only be taken on advice from WORTH Services.

WORTH Services will advise on information sharing where there is justification based on and in accordance with the school's and WSCC safeguarding policies and procedures. It will be the responsibility of the individual who has identified the concern to make the referral to Adults or Children's Safeguarding Team.

Survivors are to be kept informed of what information has been shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Improper disclosure of information is a breach of confidentiality. Where there is an unjustified breach of confidentiality, or where confidentiality is breached without seeking advice from WORTH Services or a Safeguarding Team in the first instance, this may lead to disciplinary action.

Individuals should be particularly aware that any disclosure to the person causing harm is likely to increase the risk of harm to a survivor. The Headteacher/line manager or colleague or Human Resources must not disclose any information to the person causing harm. See section 10 for further information.

Any safeguarding concerns related to children and adults with care and support needs should be referred to WSCC safeguarding services by the Headteacher/line manager, or colleague, or Human Resources who has identified the safeguarding concern.

[A referral to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference \(MARAC\)](#) may be made to if there are high-risk concerns of current domestic abuse, to support with the safety of the survivor and any children and risk management. A referral to MARAC should be discussed and with the member of staff where possible and safe to do so.

10. Person(s) Causing Harm

The school is committed to addressing issues related to employees who may be using harmful behaviour in a domestic situation. Misconduct within and outside of work could constitute misconduct that will be considered in accordance with the school's Standards of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy. The school may also consider informing the police where allegations of a potentially criminal nature arise subject to considerations set out in section 6 of this policy. Where a manager or colleague become aware of an alleged criminal matter, they must seek immediate advice from HR and/or from WORTH Services before contacting the police directly. This ensures that safeguarding and police processes are joined up and that the safety of the survivor remains the priority.

It is possible that the person using harmful behaviours, and the victim of abuse could be employees of the school. In such circumstances advice should be sought from WORTH Services and the HR Business Partner Education Team in responding to the situation and considering safety within the workplace. In such circumstances, specific consideration may need to be given to system access and confidentiality.

The school also recognises that employees who are using harmful behaviours in a domestic situation may want to change their behaviour and access support to achieve this. Perpetrating domestic abuse is a choice and there are services, often referred to as behaviour change programmes, for people who want to address their abusive behaviour. The [Respect Service](#) can be contacted by anyone who is concerned about domestic abuse perpetration.

Identifying individuals using harmful behaviours: Individuals using harmful behaviours may not seek help due to fear of judgement, sanction, or stigma. It may not be possible to assess whether someone is causing harm based on their outward behaviour. They may conceal their abuse by behaving pleasantly. Headteachers/line managers and colleagues may notice some of the following indicators of domestic abuse:

- Uncharacteristic late or absent behaviour with no explanation.
- Deterioration in performance and productivity.
- Repeated injuries, scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles, injuries to wrists and forearms.
- An obsession with time and avoiding socialising.
- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner.
- Sexual jealousy or possessiveness.
- Increase in substance use and dependence.
- Negative comments made by an individual about their partner, or the same or other gendered people in general.
- Anger and blame directed at their partner about child contact arrangements.

Such signs may arise from a range of circumstances, so it is important not to make assumptions and explore the indicators with the individual before making an allegation. Headteachers/line managers should consider seeking advice from HR and WORTH Services if they have concerns.

An immediate disclosure is unlikely as there are barriers to individuals acknowledging their abuse and seeking help. Some individuals, even when they have sought help voluntarily, will be unlikely to disclose the seriousness or extent of their abuse. Even those who are concerned enough to seek help may present with other problems such as alcohol, stress, or depression, and may not refer directly to abuse as the problem.

Responding to disclosures regarding someone using harmful behaviours:

Disclosures that an employee is using harmful behaviours in a domestic situation can come from various sources such as the police, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference specialists ([MARAC](#)), or the individual themselves.

Information should not be shared with the individual using harmful behaviours if it could increase the risk to a survivor or children. Advice should be sought from WORTH Services and the HR Business Partner Education Team on how to respond before any action is taken.

Allegations will be dealt with fairly and with support and guidance for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure. Confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted to those who need to know. There is no single way of responding to individuals using harmful behaviours, but serious consideration should be given to managing and reducing risk to survivors.

Actions could include:

- Informing the police.
- Raising safeguarding concerns in relation to children and adults at risk.
 - [Request support or raise a concern about a child - West Sussex County Council](#)
 - [Raise a concern about an adult - West Sussex County Council](#)
- Assessment of risk in the workplace and to survivors.
- Consideration of investigation in accordance with the schools Disciplinary Policy following advice from the HR Business Partner Education Team
- Signposting or referring individual to services or programmes if they are expressing a desire to change.
- Notification to the respective professional body if the individual is a registered professional.
- DBS referral.
- Advising the individual to contact their Trade Union if they are a member.

A member of SLT may need to be allocated to liaise with the person alleged to be causing harm about support options and actions. The individual will be informed of the concerns that have been raised and kept informed of action being taken, including the progress of any investigation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Duluth Power and Control Wheel



Appendix 2 - Domestic Abuse Resources and Full Web Addresses

To report a crime, refer to the Sussex Police [Report a Crime](#) website.

In an emergency call 999. For non-emergency situations 101. People may also have a safe word or emoji that they can use to let someone else know that they should call the police. If the person is unable to speak on the phone, there are systems in place called "Silent Solutions" to connect them to the right service.

If they are calling from a mobile, they can use "Silent Solution" by pressing 55 and the operator will transfer the call to the relevant police force as an emergency. The police call handler will then ask them a series of simple yes or no questions. If they are still not able to speak, they need to listen to the instructions given so the handler can assess the call and send help. Calling from a mobile does not allow the police to track the location of the call.

If they are calling from a landline, pressing 55 will not work. If they cannot speak they should stay on the line, and the operator will connect them to a police call handler. If they need to put the phone down the line will stay open for 45 seconds. If the phone is picked up again during this time and the operator is concerned for their safety, they will be put through to a call handler. Calling 999 from a landline means the Police may be able to retrieve information on the location to send help.

Further Information on domestic abuse, including support services support can be found [here](#) with additional information available at [Safe Space Sussex](#)

Resources Referred to in This Policy

Older People Experiencing Domestic Abuse

- See the Age UK webpage titled [Domestic Abuse: More Needs To Be Done To Support Older People](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/discover/2021/december/domestic-abuse-more-needs-to-be-done-to-support-older-people/)<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/discover/2021/december/domestic-abuse-more-needs-to-be-done-to-support-older-people/>
- Also refer to the [Hourglass website](#)

Legislation

- See the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) webpage for information about the legislation.

Confidential Helpline

- See the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)

Flexible Working

- See the school's Flexible Working Policy

Support for LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence

- Refer to the [Galop](#) website.

Support for male victims of domestic abuse

- Refer to the [Mankind Initiative website](#) which includes information on [Statistics and Research](#)

The SafeLives charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse

- Including [MARAC](#) range of trusted resources and guidance

Public Interest Disclosures

- See the [Public Interest Disclosures Act 1998](#) webpage for information about the legislation.

To request support or raise a concern to WSCC about a child

- Refer to the [Integrated Front Door \(IFD\) for West Sussex Children Services](#) webpage.

To raise a concern about an adult

- Refer to the WSCC [Raise a concern about an adult webpage](#)

For the Refuge charity - support for people fleeing domestic abuse

- Refer to the [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) website.
- Or call the Helpline on 0808 2000 247

For the Respect charity - stopping perpetrators of domestic abuse

- Refer to the [Respect](#) website.

Safe Space Sussex - sources of support

- Refer to the [Safe Space Sussex website](#).

Support and Advice - domestic & sexual violence and abuse

- Refer to the [WORTH services](#) domestic and sexual abuse advisers.
- See [here](#) for support in West Sussex if you, or someone you know, is experiencing abuse or violence.

Appendix 3 - Enquiring about domestic abuse and responding to disclosures

AVAA Approach

AVAA stands for Ask, Validate, Assess & Action. AVAA is a best practice model for enquiring about and responding to domestic abuse. Headteachers/Line managers and employees may find this model helpful when considering engaging with an individual who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

Ask

Ensure conversations are held in a confidential and safe setting.

- Explain the limits of confidentiality and reasons why information may need to be shared.
- Introduce the subject of domestic abuse and rationale for enquiry i.e., that the school is aware that domestic abuse can affect staff and wants to ensure the safety and wellbeing of employees.
- Ask directly about domestic abuse, for example:
 - Has anyone close to you ever made you feel afraid or physically hurt you?
 - Do you feel safe at home and in your relationship?
 - Domestic abuse is not just physical violence but may also include putting you down or controlling your money. Is this something that you are experiencing?

Validate

Validation is a key step which can affect the likelihood of engaging a survivor in support immediately and in the long-term. Embarrassment, shame, and concerns around being judged, can affect survivors' ability to seek support.

Headteachers/line managers/colleagues should respond to a survivor of domestic abuse in a non-judgmental and non-blaming manner and ensure that survivors feel heard and believed. Messages of validation promote self-help behaviours, autonomy, and independence, ensuring that survivors are treated with respect and dignity.

Statements that will provide validation include:

- "Thank you for sharing with me."
- "You have the right to live free from abuse."
- "No-one has the right to hurt or control you or make you feel afraid."
- "I believe you."
- "Abuse is not your fault."
- "We can help you access support."
- "It is not ok for someone to treat you that way."
- "You are not alone."

Assess

It is important to assess risk to enable colleagues, Headteacher/line managers and other people involved to understand the danger posed to a survivor and the people around them such as, their family, colleagues, customers, and the public.

The risk of current and future harm or homicide should be considered to inform what action to take to keep survivors safe. Risk is not static and may change over time; regular re-assessment allows review of the actions required to promote safety.

There are a range of different resources that can help to assess risk including:

- The survivor themselves. Are they afraid and, if so, what are their fears?
- Discussion with other professionals such as IDVAs and safeguarding leads, where confidentiality allows.
- Consider whether the survivor or their dependents have additional needs e.g., mental health issues or a physical disability.

Examples of questions to assess immediate risks:

- "Do you have any immediate concerns for your safety or the safety of others?"
- "Do you feel safe returning home or have somewhere safe you can go?"
- "Is anyone else at risk?" (Consider the risk to children, unborn children, and vulnerable adults).
- "Where is the person/s causing harm?"

Act

Agreed action should follow the risk assessment. Actions must prioritise the safety, security and dignity of a survivor and their dependents. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' action plan to support survivors. Appropriate action is unique and dependent on the risk and an individual's situation.

Appendix 4 – Guidance for Headteachers/line managers and HR

Summary

Headteachers/line managers and HR are not expected to act as a specialist on domestic abuse. Their role is to work alongside specialist services such as WORTH Services to provide support and explore the management of risk.

The questions in this guidance may be useful to headteachers/line managers and Human Resources in assessing potential risks posed to an employee and considering appropriate actions. However, the list should not be considered exhaustive and specialist advice from WORTH Services should always be sought.

Key considerations:

- 2.1 Be familiar with the use of the AVAA (Ask, Validate, Assess & Action) model.
- 2.2 Consider an appropriate location for the discussion such as somewhere quiet and comfortable, and confidential.
- 2.3 Consider barriers to safe conversation, such as avoiding sitting behind a desk and consider your body language in any discussion.
- 2.4 Ensure that the employee is reminded of the school's approach to confidentiality.

Questions to help explore the matter.

Explore the current situation:

- "Are you currently feeling safe at home?"
- "Do you feel aspects of your life are controlled by (partner/ex-partner/family member)"
- "Have there been any recent incidents of violence or threats made towards you or others?"
- "Have you or anyone else ever been injured by (partner/ex-partner/family member)?"
- "What are you most worried about happening?"

Explore frequency and severity:

- "How often do you feel unsafe in your relationship?"
- "Have you noticed any patterns as to when things are worse?"
- "Have they become more frequent or severe over time?"
- "Can you tell me about a time when you have felt most fearful?"

Explore support network:

- "Do you have anyone you can talk to and find helpful or supportive?"
- "Are there any support services you are aware of or currently using?"

Explore the work impact:

- "Does... (person causing harm) ever make it difficult for you to come to work or complete any work-related activities?"
- "Is there anything that you feel we could implement to support you whilst at work?"
- "Do you feel safe coming to and leaving work?"
- "Do you feel safe in your working environment?"

Safety Planning

Based on exploration of the risk you should work with the employee to create a safety plan. The employee may have devised their own plan or approach to help them to feel safe. Their own planning should be the starting point to build on what has been effective for the employee.

It is important that the employee feels comfortable with actions discussed so each element should be agreed. A robust safety plan is helped by involving as many trusted adults as possible. You should discuss with the employee whether there is anyone they feel able to share the safety plan with. You should consider encouraging the employee to identify supportive people around them for this purpose.

A key consideration is confidentiality of the safety plan. The employee must never be in a position where the person causing harm may have access to their safety plan or be

aware of their disclosure of abuse, even if this person is known to you or may work for the local authority.

The primary role of the Headteacher/line manager and Human Resources will be to explore actions that can be considered in the work context. It is essential to involve WORTH Services to explore wider safety considerations. However, the below actions and considerations may be helpful to safety planning.

General and Immediate Safety Planning

▪ Emergency Services

- Call 999 in an emergency.
- The silent call option can be used by pressing 55.
- If the person feels unable to do this, explore who could call on their behalf and what is the plan around this? (i.e. code word/code emoji).
- If the person causing harm attends your property, do not open door or communicate and contact police in an emergency. Keep all doors and windows locked.
- If in a public place, stay near people, go into shops or public buildings, use a personal attack alarm, ask for help to contact emergency services if necessary.
- Identify an area with an exit or access within the home that might be safer to make an emergency call or seek help in the event the situation is escalating when at home.
- Keep important and emergency telephone numbers.
- Rehearse an escape plan if appropriate in an emergency which could include:
 - Packing an emergency bag for yourself and your children and hiding it somewhere safe.
 - Consider items such as spare clothes, children's toys, keys for the house and car, cash, bankcard, driving license/car documents, passport, visa, work permits, lease/rental agreement / mortgage details, benefit documents, your birth certificate and those of your children, marriage certificate/certificate of civil partnership, medical documents, address book and details of all household bills in your name.
 - Create an emergency code word with a trusted adult.
 - Always keep a charged mobile phone on your person.
 - Be aware of ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) in pharmacies.

Workplace Safety Considerations

- Consider changes to mitigate the person causing harm monitoring or having access to the employee: Working pattern, start and finish times
 - Working hours.
 - Work location
 - Workload changes or reductions may be helpful where circumstances are impacting on wellbeing and resilience at work.

- Changes in specific duties, for example not expecting the employee to answer telephones or be public facing.
- Provide information on the Employee Assistance Programme
- Consider whether it is necessary to avoid lone working.
- Discuss any financial concerns and whether changes to how and where salary is paid is a relevant consideration.
- Discuss any concerns relating to commuting to and from work, including having access to secure parking and having someone walk them to and from their car.
- Agree how to respond if the person causing harm telephones or visits the school.
- Explore and agree whether reception staff should be provided with details of the person causing harm.
- Check and agree emergency contacts for the employee.
- Consider the person causing harm's access to sensitive work information or any potential risk that may be posed to the wider public or other employees as a result.
- Be aware of listening devices/monitoring of conversations that may be taking place and take all necessary steps to mitigate this where possible.

Monitoring and Follow Up

- Agree a plan and timescales for confidentially checking in with the employee to monitor their safety and well-being.
- Consider more informal ways to check in such as check in conversations, going for a walk or using a safe environment/space.
- Adjust the safety plan as needed based on ongoing assessments.
- Provide reminders of resources and support available.
- Consider your own wellbeing and follow-up with your own line manager if needed.

9. Document History

Reviewed	Ratified	Expires
March 26		April 27