

# Domestic Abuse Policy: Supporting Staff & Students

**2022 - 2025**



**Edge Hill  
University**

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*This policy does not form part of employee's contracts of employment and may be reviewed and amended subject to agreement by relevant parties. This policy must be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice which overarches all the University's policies and procedures and details generic aspects that apply to all of our policies and procedures*

## 1. Policy Statement

In line with Edge Hill University's core values, this policy demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all staff and students. At its foundation, this policy promotes gender equality, dignity, and respect, both on and off campus. If a member of staff or student feels that they are at risk of harm or are a victim of abuse, they should feel confident to seek information, guidance, or support from the university.

The university is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse while recognising that domestic abuse is a gendered crime that forms part of wider violence against women and girls, victims of abuse regardless of age, ethnicity, and gender will be supported.

## Policy Introduction

### 2.1 What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) as:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional." This definition includes so-called 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM)

Central to this definition is that a victim and a person who is abusing them have a personal relationship. People who are 'personally connected' include:

- Intimate partners
- Ex-partners
- Family members
- Individuals who share parental responsibility for a child

There are different forms of domestic abuse including but not exclusive to:

- **Physical abuse** (violence). This can include hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, choking, use of weapons, and threats of violence.

- **Sexual abuse** (violence). This can be described as any behaviour (physical, emotional, verbal, online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, harmful, exploitive, or unwanted that is inflicted on a person, and includes taking advantage of their incapacity to give informed consent.
- **Economic or financial abuse.** This is often an element of coercive behaviour, that co-occurs with other forms of abuse. It interferes with a victim's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation, and utilities. This can make the victim economically dependent on the abuser and limit their ability to escape to safety. Examples of economic abuse include having sole control of the family income, preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits, interfering with a victim's education, training, or employment, not allowing or controlling access to a mobile phone, transport, utilities, or food, and damage victim's property.
- **Controlling or coercive behaviour** (or emotional/psychological abuse). Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts or assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a victim. Examples include a victim being isolated from family or friends, to limit or prevent outside support; monitoring their activities throughout the day; denying them freedom or autonomy (such as preventing them from going to university, or if they go out, stalking their every move, and taking their phone and changing their passwords). This may also include controlling aspects of a victim's health and body, such as controlling how much they eat, sleep, or time spent in the bathroom.
- **Stalking.** Often committed by ex-partners, this is a specific type of harassment, often described as a pattern of unwanted, fixated, or obsessive behaviour that is intrusive and causes fear of violence or serious harm. For example, abusers may bombard victims with unwanted and often threatening phone contact, and physical stalking at their home or place of work or study.
- **Digital and online abuse.** This can be described as technology-facilitated abuse that can include controlling and coercive behaviours, such as cyber (or digital) stalking, threatening or nuisance phone calls and emails, location tracking, online harassment, and dissemination of intimate images; commonly referred to as 'revenge porn', this term minimises the harm it causes victims and is increasingly referred to as image-based sexual abuse. Digital and online abuse is a serious and widespread problem affecting people of all ages.
- **'Honour'-based abuse** (including forced marriage) and FGM. The CPS defines 'honour' 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."

Types of 'honour' abuse are wide-ranging, including:

- Psychological,
  - Physical, and sexual abuse,
  - Forced marriage,
  - Withdrawal from education,
  - Isolation,
  - Imprisonment,
  - Kidnapping and trafficking.
- 
- **Spiritual abuse.** This can be described as any attempt to exert power and control over someone using faith, religion, or beliefs. The Faith and Violence against Women and Girls Coalition noted that those in a position to help often overlook the significant barriers victims face in getting help due to the victim's religious identity, faith community, and the spiritual abuse they have suffered at the hands of their abuser(s).
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- **Pet abuse.** Domestic violence toward pets both correlates with domestic violence toward humans and is also a tool of domestic abuse. Violent members of the household will threaten to hurt or actually hurt a companion animal as a method of control and a form of emotional violence.

## 2.2 Inclusivity

Domestic abuse data reflects an increased risk for people from marginalised groups. Individuals with a disability are more likely to experience domestic abuse than individuals with no disability according to ONS. Data from ONS also suggests a greater risk to individuals who are of mixed ethnicity, and data from Stonewall indicates an increased risk for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing domestic abuse.

While domestic abuse is recognised as a gender-based crime, with victims and survivors predominantly female, it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, and sexuality.

## 2.3 Signs and indicators

It is important to be aware of the signs and indicators that a colleague or student may be experiencing domestic abuse. Signs to look out for are listed below, but are not limited to:

### **Work productivity/Academic engagement:**

- Receives a high volume of emails, texts, and phone calls from current/former partners and family members
- Upset or anxious in response to emails, texts, and phone calls
- High absenteeism or persistently late without/unusual explanation
- Frequently anxious about leaving work/classes on time and going home
- Unusual reluctance to engage with colleagues/workplace/campus culture (or change in usual level)

- When working remotely/online, appearing anxious/not attending or using camera when expected
- Drop in student attendance/grades, staff work performance, meeting work/assignment deadlines.
- Reduction in how they communicate/interact in class/meetings with colleagues or tutors/peers

### **Psychological signs:**

- Fear of current/former partner or family member
- Expresses that a family member (child/parent) is at risk of harm from a current/former partner or another family member
- Mentions abusive behaviour fleetingly, casually, or in other terms (“it’s a shame I can’t join in, but they get cross if I’m not back in time”)
- Frequently cry and/or act anxious (online or on campus)

### **Physical signs:**

- Fatigue or frequent/sudden/unexpected medical problems/sickness
- Repeated visible injuries (e.g., bruises) and implausible explanations
- Sudden change in dress or pattern of make-up (e.g., excessive clothing in summer or seems unhappy/uncomfortable in a complete change in style) and or unkempt appearance
- Notable change in weight

If you have concerns about a colleague’s wellbeing you can signpost them to the staff wellbeing guide where there is a list of support available for staff. If you have concerns about a student’s wellbeing, you can signpost them to the Counselling and Wellbeing Team for more support.

## **2.4 Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse**

It is important that members of our community can provide appropriate interpersonal support in the first instance if a disclosure is made directly to them regarding domestic abuse.

It is important that we understand the complexity, sensitivity, and challenges of disclosing domestic abuse, and avoid making assumptions or judgements that are based on myths and attitudes about domestic abuse such as:

- They could just leave
- They should fight back
- It is a private matter; we shouldn’t get involved
- It may be culturally acceptable
- I don’t believe that they are abusive they are so nice
- It can’t be that bad if they keep going back
- They’ve only been in a relationship for a few months and are only young with no dependents, so why don’t they just leave.

Staff or students who may be victims of domestic abuse may find it difficult to disclose their abuse because of stigma and may only disclose it when they are at risk of disciplinary, being dismissed or having performance or attendance issues that are now being addressed. It is important that victims who disclose their abuse are treated with respect and listened to without judgement or prejudice.

If a staff member or student discloses domestic abuse:

- Offer them a private space to talk where they feel safe
- If they have someone with them, ask them discreetly if they would like this person to stay with them or not and if not, ask the other person to wait outside.
- Listen without judgement or prejudice, believe them and acknowledge
- Reassure them they are not alone and offer to signpost to appropriate services
- Respect their background, culture and beliefs.

## 2.5 Responding to Perpetrators

Perpetrators of domestic abuse may be staff, students or visitors at the university.

If there are any incidents reported of domestic abuse, involving a member of staff or a student as a perpetrator, an investigation will be carried out as outlined in Section 10 of the Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy. Relevant disciplinary processes for staff and students respectively may be required to be implemented following an investigation into any allegations or incidents where evidence of harassment, violence or other unacceptable conduct has been identified.

If there is concern and/or evidence a serious crime has taken place this information may be required to be shared with outside agencies such as the police. (Please see limitations of confidentiality below). A decision to share information will be made based on the evidence and information available through the risk assessment (see Appendix A). This decision will be informed by the risk assessment, and any other relevant information and evidence, and the responsibility for the decision to share information will be taken by the Lead Safeguarding Officers in Student Services and Human Resources.

***An internal investigation may need to be paused at any time if an external criminal investigation is taking place regarding an incident.***

If an alleged perpetrator indicates they would like support to address their abusive behaviour, they will be signposted to this support, and provisions can be made to enable them to access this such as time to access appointments.

There may be incidents where an alleged perpetrator is not a student or member of staff at Edge Hill for example, a partner, ex-partner or family member of a student or member of staff. If a concern is raised for the safety or welfare of a member of staff, a student or others on campus, a risk assessment will be carried out to ensure all

safety measures have been considered for the victim and others on campus and if appropriate the police will be notified.

## 2. Duties, Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 Limitations of confidentiality

Normally confidentiality would be upheld unless a member of staff or student has consented to information being shared with other teams and services.

However, confidentiality has limitations and cannot be upheld if:

- It is required by law that information is shared for example a serious crime is disclosed
- There is a potential or known risk to a child under 18 or an adult at risk.
- There is a serious threat to life or serious harm to the member of staff or student, or others.

It is important that the limitations of confidentiality are communicated to staff and students at the beginning of a conversation, and that confidentiality is not promised as it may be that later in the process, that promise needs to be broken for one of the reasons stated above.

### 3.2 Staff experiencing domestic abuse

Edge Hill respect the employee's right to privacy if they do not wish to inform the university that they have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse.

If a member of staff discloses that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they will be supported and respected without judgement.

Staff can seek support through their line manager, HR and Occupational Health, including access to counselling services.

### 3.3 Line Manager responsibility

It is important for line managers to appreciate how difficult it may be for an employee to discuss their personal circumstances and should always offer support without judgement. It is important for them to recognise that the signs of abuse may not always be obvious, however, it may have an impact on performance, attendance, and general wellbeing.

Where a manager suspects or is informed that a member of staff is experiencing domestic abuse, they should:

- Contact the HR Advisory Team for confidential advice. If the member of staff does not wish for their information to be shared with HR, advice can be requested by anonymising the member of staff.



- When speaking to the staff member about their personal circumstances ensure it is in a private space.
- Handle the conversation with sensitivity and care and ensure the member of staff does not feel pressured to disclose anything.
- Respect confidentiality (see section 3.1)
- Recognise that the member of staff may prefer to discuss their situation with someone else, for example, someone in HR, or a third-party organisation.
- Discuss with the member of staff what they want to do, give them time to consider this and discuss the support available to them, providing signposting information to both internal and external support.
- If children under 18 are involved, this information must be referred to a Designated Safeguarding Officer (see section 3.8).

### 3.4 Human Resources Responsibility

There is a responsibility of Edge Hill as an employer to ensure the health and safety of staff at work as outlined by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

- A risk assessment will be carried out to determine the risk and threat to the personal safety of both the individual and other staff and students on campus (see appendix A)
- Risks identified along with mitigating actions will be documented and implemented as soon as possible. This will be completed by HR with the line manager and member of staff.

Such actions may include:

- Improving safety measures such as restricting access to areas using cards or changing security codes on doors.
- Reminding reception/switchboard staff not to divulge information about staff, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or work patterns.
- Offering changes to work patterns, helping to make the employee less at risk at work, and on their journeys to and from work.
- Offering redeployment to other positions or changes to specific duties that may reduce risk.
- Agree on what to tell other staff who work closely with the member of staff and advise them how to respond if the perpetrator contacts the workplace.

- Provide a photograph of the perpetrator, and car registration details to Campus Support so they have details if any concerns are raised or if individuals or vehicles are recognised.
- Advising line managers and staff that special leave may be available to them to allow for some paid or unpaid leave if this would help the staff member.
- Advising line managers and staff that flexible working arrangements may be helpful if the member of staff is struggling with punctuality or attendance because of the abuse.
- Advising line managers that time off can be given to enable the staff member to attend appointments with support services.

### 3.5 Facilities Management Responsibility

Any responsibility of Facilities Management will be identified in a risk assessment carried out by HR/Line Managers and the employee. The risk assessment may include:

- Information about what Campus Support should do if they become aware of any potential issues or recognise a specific individual or vehicle on campus.
- If appropriate and agreed, Campus Support may be asked to chaperone staff from their vehicle to their building if the risk assessment has identified the need.
- If appropriate and available, temporary accommodation overnight for staff may be able to be provided through Facilities Management if necessary.

### 3.6 Students experiencing domestic abuse

If a student discloses that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they will be supported and respected without judgement. Students can seek support through their personal tutor, other academic staff, and staff from professional services including Student Services.

### 3.7 Academic Staff / Professional Services staff responsibilities

Academic and Professional Services staff are likely to encounter students who may be experiencing domestic abuse. It is important that staff understand the complexity of domestic abuse, and that there is also a possibility that the alleged perpetrator may also be a student at the university.

If a student discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, or the member of staff suspects this may be the case they should:

- Provide a quiet and private space for the student to talk

- Check that the student is comfortable talking with them, or if they prefer to talk to somebody else.
- If the student is being accompanied by another student, check that they are comfortable with them being there, and if not, ask them politely to wait outside.
- Confidentiality should be upheld, and limitations of confidentiality explained to the student (see section 3.1).
- Listen without judgement to the student and ask the student if they are receiving any support.
- Discuss the support that can be offered to the student if they wish to access this from the Wellbeing team and external services.
- If the student is on a placement for professional practice, consider that there will need to be an additional risk assessment carried out in conjunction with the placement provider to ensure the safety of the student and others, and seek advice from the Counselling and Wellbeing Team.
- If there are any children under the age of 18 involved, this will need to be reported to a Designated Safeguarding Officer (see section 3.8).

### 3.8 Student Counselling and Wellbeing Team Responsibilities

- The Counselling and Wellbeing Team will provide wellbeing support to the student as required with their consent.
- A risk assessment will be carried out to determine the risk and threat to the personal safety of both the individual and other staff and students on campus (see Appendix A) Risks identified along with mitigating actions will be documented and implemented as soon as possible. This will be completed by the Counselling and Wellbeing Team with the student and other relevant staff from the department, if appropriate and with permission.
- The student will be signposted and referred to external agencies for support with their consent.

### 3.7 Student Accommodation Team Responsibilities

- The student Accommodation team can provide practical support for students who live on campus including providing temporary overnight accommodation for students who do not live on campus or students needing to move in an emergency if required.

- Accommodation staff will feed into the risk assessment to ensure that any risks based on their living arrangements are taken into account and mitigations are put in place.
- The student accommodation team will signpost and refer the student to the Counselling and Wellbeing Team for support if they consent.

### 3.8 Safeguarding

Safeguarding children under age 18 is paramount and it is everyone's responsibility. Children are recognised as direct victims of domestic abuse when they live with or witness it. The devastating psychological impact this can have on children is widely acknowledged. Children can often be used by perpetrators to coerce their victims. This can include threatening to harm children or threatening to remove them from a parent's care to inflict further psychological distress on the victim or if the victim is for example threatening to leave the relationship. It is also not uncommon for children to become direct victims of physical domestic abuse, particularly if they attempt to protect another victim from harm.

If children are known to be living in an environment where there is alleged domestic abuse, staff must report this to a safeguarding officer immediately (see safeguarding policy). The consent of the staff member or student is not required for this information to be shared.

### 3.9 Record keeping

Anonymous records will be kept monitoring the prevalence of domestic abuse across the University community. The Directors of Student Services and HR will use the data provided to raise awareness and design training if required.

## 4 Policy Provisions

It is imperative that staff and students feel safe to disclose any experiences of domestic abuse. For staff, there are several confidential rooms, with disabled access available in the HR department, that line managers or HR can use to talk to a member of staff safely and confidentially. For students, Catalyst has a range of confidential spaces available which are accessible and can be booked for a confidential conversation with any member of staff.

The response to any disclosure of domestic abuse will be led by the victim and will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the victim, with due consideration and safeguarding for any children or adults who may be at risk.

## Policy Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Appendix 2: Links to other relevant policies

## Document Control

Version	Date	Change Author	Summary of Changes
V.1	November 2022	Corryn Brown	New Policy

## Endmatter

<b>Document Title</b>	Domestic Abuse Policy
<b>Document Owner(s)</b>	Director of Human Resources & Director of Student Services
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## Appendix 1: Risk assessment



### Risk from others Assessment

In the case that a member of staff or a student discloses they are a victim of domestic abuse, this risk assessment should be completed to determine the level of risk and inform the type of support or adjustments that may be required to promote their safety at Edge Hill and the safety of others.

<b>Name of the staff member or student:</b>	
<b>Please indicate if the victim is a member of staff or a student</b>	
<b>Department / Service Area (staff only):</b>	
<b>Does the staff member's role involve travel/visits off site? (staff only):</b>	
<b>Course / Programme (students only):</b>	
<b>Year of study (students only):</b>	
<b>Does the course require a placement/professional practice? (students only):</b>	
<b>Date of risk assessment:</b>	
<b>Who is completing the risk assessment:</b>	
<b>A brief outline of the incident/issue:</b>	
<b>Is the alleged perpetrator a staff member or student?</b>	
<b>If yes: please indicate their name</b>	
<b>Please provide any identifying information e.g. description, car registration</b>	

## Risk Analysis (Risks of Employee remaining in work)

### Guidance - Scores for 'Level of Risk'

You will be asked to provide a score out of 5 of **severity** and **likelihood** based on the following sliding scales:

Severity (a)	Likelihood (b)
1 - Trivial	1 - Remote (almost never)
2 - Minor	2 - Unlikely
3 - Moderate	3 - Possible
4 - Serious	4 - Likely
5 - Highest Severity	5 - Very Likely

Multiplying the **Severity** x **Likelihood** will give you a number between 1 and 25.

Severity (a) x Likelihood (b) = Overall risk

### How does this work?

For example, the severity of a plane accident could be high (death), and the likelihood of a plane accident (given a company of international repute) is low (because of the huge amount of money and effort that goes into reducing the likelihood) so the overall risk is low.

The table below illustrates this principle fully and how it works with this Risk Assessment:

	Trivial	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Highest Severity
Remote	1	2	3	4	5
Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
Possible	3	6	9	12	15
Likely	4	8	12	16	20
Very Likely	5	10	15	20	25

The person completing the Risk Assessment then has a relative scale of the overall risk on which to manage the problem and introduce any preventative or protective measures:

<b>Rating Bands</b>		
<b>Low Risk (1 – 8)</b>	<b>Medium Risk (9 – 12)</b>	<b>High Risk (15 – 25)</b>
Controls for mitigating risk may already be in place and risk to the victim and others is unlikely on campus	Review controls for mitigating risk as the risk of harm to the victim and/or others on campus is likely.	The risk of harm to the victim and/or others is very high and mitigating risks will be required immediately. Outside agencies may also need to be contacted i.e. the police.

Based on the findings of your analysis, you will then need to consider possible controls to mitigate the risk (in the separate table provided).



Analysis	Yes/No	Severity of risk of harm to victim or others (a)	Likelihood of risk of harm to victim or others (b)	Total (a) x (b)	Risk Level (Please circle)	Explanation / What actions to mitigate risk should be in place.
Does the victim fear for their safety?		/5	/5		Low / Medium / High	
Does the victim fear for the safety of others?		/5	/5		Low / Medium / High	
Does the staff member or student work or study away from campus i.e. placement		/5	/5		Low / Medium / High	
Are there any children (under 18) or vulnerable adults who may be at risk?		/5	/5		Low / Medium / High	

Analysis	Yes/No	Details
Is the alleged perpetrator a member of staff or a student at the university?		
Has the incident/abuse been reported to relevant agencies e.g. police? (If so, detail if there are any bail conditions in place or injunctions)		
Are the police investigating the incident/abuse?		

## Controls for mitigating risk

Options	Yes / No	Explanation / Justification / details
No requirement to take action identified		
Manage the risk and implement actions / adjustments to mitigate risk and closely monitor through line manager / wellbeing team		
Share information with relevant internal services such as Campus Support, Accommodation Team, Faculty or Programme Leads.		
Share information with relevant external agencies i.e. social care, police		
Other		

**Share information with external services Yes / No**

**Explanation/Justification:**

<b>Safeguarding Lead: Signature</b>	
<b>Signature of risk assessor:</b>	
<b>Signature of victim:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

## **Appendix 3: Relevant Policies**

[Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[Disciplinary Procedures \(staff\)](#)

[Special Leave and compassionate leave policy](#)

[Flexible working policy](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Serious Incident reporting policy](#)

[Student Disciplinary Policy](#)

**Sexual Misconduct Policy**