

## Domestic Abuse in the Workplace policy

### 1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers and flexi workers engaged by the Group (this is inclusive of all genders and gender identities).

The purpose of this policy is to determine xxxxxxx approach to domestic abuse and set out the support available to individuals.

xxxxxxx has a responsibility to provide all staff with a safe and effective working environment. For some staff, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety outside of the domestic sphere.

xxxxxxx acknowledges that domestic abuse is a significant problem which has a devastating impact on individuals and their families. This policy represents a commitment to take all reasonable steps possible to combat the reality and impact of domestic abuse on those being abused and to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.

This procedure ensures that both people experiencing domestic abuse and perpetrators of domestic abuse are aware of the support that is available within the organisation. It also provides guidance to line managers when supporting staff who are affected by domestic abuse. It is important to note however that domestic abuse is not condoned under any circumstance

### 2. Aims and Objectives

This policy details the principles for providing assistance and taking action in cases of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

This policy aims to ensure that those who are subjected to domestic abuse are treated in a sympathetic and sensitive manner, in accordance with their needs.

### 3. Key terms and definitions

**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** refers to the following range of serious crimes which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse;
- Sexual Offences; Stalking; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Crimes Said to be Committed in the Name of 'Honour';
- Forced Marriage; Prostitution; and
- Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.

Our approach to **safeguarding** aims to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse or neglect.

Domestic abuse is defined by the Home Office as: *"Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 16 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or are family members, regardless of gender and sexuality."*

### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

**Human Resources and Group Lead on Domestic Abuse** – policy owner; ensure this policy is up to date, incorporates best practice and is legally compliant; provide advice and support; oversight of consistency of application.

**Employee** – understand and adhere to policy; ensure actions are completed in a timely manner; ensure their own behaviour and conduct is appropriate; awareness of escalation of issues; ensure their own health, safety and wellbeing.

**Line Manager** – responsible for the implementation of the policy; decision making; carrying out the required actions in a timely manner; reporting, maintaining compliance and following the policy; escalation of issues; ensure health, safety and wellbeing of employees; awareness and understanding of issues; ability to deal with issues.

## **5. Accessibility**

If any aspect of this policy causes you difficulty on account of any disability, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this issue with either your line manager or the HR team, who will make appropriate arrangement

## **6. Policy**

### **The impact of domestic abuse in the workplace**

It should be noted that there may be incidents which occur in the workplace or specifically affect the work of a member of staff .Possible signs of domestic abuse include

- Changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason
- Arriving late or leaving early
- Changes in behaviour including uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing
- Poor attendance or high presenteeism without an explanation
- Not taking annual leave, TOIL or sickness days
- Needing regular time off for appointments
- Increased turnover

### **The impact of domestic abuse on work colleagues**

Domestic abuse also affects people close to the victim and this can include work colleagues. Some effects may include:

- Being followed to or from work
- Being subject to questioning about the victim's contact details or locations
- Covering for other workers during absence from work
- Trying to deal with the abuse and fear for their own safety
- Being unaware of the abuse or not knowing how to help

### **The impact of domestic abuse on the employer**

Some effects may include:

- Negative impact on productivity, performance and morale
- Staff turnover, as employees may have to leave work or move away to escape abuse

xxxxxxx expects all staff to report their concerns if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. In the first instance, a member of staff should speak to their line manager about their concerns. Alternatively a confidential reporting line is now available through Crime Stoppers 0800 111 4444. This is a 24 hour hotline that allows any member of staff to report any concern they may have about a colleague or practices in the workplace. The hotline can be used anonymously.

Our Group Lead on Domestic Abuse and the trained Domestic Abuse Champions will be available to provide advice, support and guidance to both members of staff and line managers.

Staff who disclose that they are experiencing domestic abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other colleagues without their permission.

There are however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when high levels of risk are identified, there are concerns regarding children or vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of their staff and/or customers. In these circumstances, the member of staff will be informed as to the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, only relevant and proportionate information will be shared on a need to know basis.

Confidentiality cannot always be assured for staff who disclose that they are a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

It is crucial to keep a record any conversations had with either the person experiencing the abuse, or the perpetrator. Records should be kept of any actions taken, including decisions to not take action, and their rationale.

There are a number of ways in which staff experiencing domestic abuse can be supported by Peabody:

### **Identifying domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is unlikely to be disclosed easily by individuals or perpetrators. There are a number of steps that can be taken to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse including how to recognise the problem, respond, provide support and refer to the appropriate help.

### **Confidentiality and right to privacy**

#### **Support for staff**

- Through offering practical support (see section on practical support)
- Raising awareness generally of the issues and in particular amongst managers
- Providing training opportunities to line managers
- Signpost to an appropriate counselling service or employee assistance programme if appropriate
- Taking a clear anti-abuse stance against perpetrators
- It is essential that staff feel able to disclose this personal information and are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager. However if they feel unable to raise this with their line manager, support is available from the Domestic Abuse Champions.

### **Support for Line Managers**

#### **Identifying domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is unlikely to be disclosed easily by individuals or perpetrators. There are a number of steps that can be taken to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse including how to recognise the problem, respond, provide support and refer to the appropriate help.

See - Ten steps to address the effects of domestic abuse

The guidance for line managers when facilitating a conversation with a member of staff about domestic abuse is found in - Asking difficult questions – Guidance for line managers.

If a line managers require further advice or assistance before speaking to a member of staff, further support is available from Human Resources and the Domestic Abuse Champions.

### **Practical support available**

Line managers may consider offering a broad range of support to staff experiencing domestic abuse including:

- Special Leave provision: staff experiencing domestic abuse may take up to 70 hours of paid leave to enable them to manage their situation i.e. time off for appointments, court hearings, childcare, moving house or seeking other professional help.
- Flexibility with annual leave, flexi-time or time off in lieu.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns using existing procedures i.e. flexible working.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with the perpetrator in a customer-facing role.
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example blocking emails / screening telephone calls; alerting reception / security ; and ensuring arrangements are in place for safely travelling to and from work
- Re-deployment or relocation.
- With the member of staff's consent:
  - o advise colleagues on a need-to-know basis and agree a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace
  - o provide a photograph of the perpetrator to line management, security staff and reception
  - o provide copies of any civil orders in place to reception/security staff

- Review the security of personal information held, such as temporary or new address and bank details.
- Where appropriate, update next of kin contact details
- Review how salary is currently paid and consider alternatives
- Refer to Appendix 3 for a list of specialist domestic abuse services

The right of staff to make their own decision about the course of action at every stage will be respected. It is recognised that a member of staff may need some time to decide what to do and may try different options during this process

Domestic abuse perpetrated by staff will not be condoned and the Group will investigate any allegations of domestic abuse. Staff should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter which can lead to criminal convictions. Conduct outside of

### **Perpetrators**

work may lead to disciplinary action being taken against a member of staff; as such conduct may undermine the confidence and trust the organisation has in them. However, xxxxxx recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting perpetrators to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If a member of staff discloses perpetrating domestic abuse, the police should be informed as well as HR so that the disciplinary or other internal procedures can be considered. However, the member of staff will be provided with information about the services and support available to them (Contact Respect - <http://respect.uk.net/contact-us>).

This procedure can be applicable in cases where a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner/ex-partner, or family member
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner/ex-partner, or family member
- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them
- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship

xxxxxx will ensure:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- All staff will receive guidance and support
- Investigations will be sufficiently independent

The accused member of staff 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

### **Victims and perpetrators working for xxxxx**

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse work for xxxxxx; appropriate action will be taken.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the perpetrator, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim

This may include a change of duties or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain data and software.

### **Regulation and Legislation**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996

- Employment Rights Act 1999
- Equalities Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)