Manea Pre-School (01354) 680928
Station Road • Manea • Cambridgeshire • PE15 0HA
Email: Maneapreschool@manea.cambs.sch.uk

Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff, Volunteers and Managers in an Early Years Setting

Domestic abuse is a crime, and regardless of where it occurs it is against the law. Domestic abuse is defined as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged *6 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse' covers a range of types of abuse, including, but not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, verbal and economic abuse. It also includes so called 'Honour Based Violence', Female Genital Mutilation, Coercive Control and Forced Marriage. Serious Crime Act 20*5 controlling and coercive behaviour became criminal offence. Controlling behaviour is behaviour that makes people subordinate or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, taking control of their resources and depriving them of their independence. Coercive behaviour includes acts of assault, threat, humiliation or intimidation that are used to harm, punish or frighten another person. Please see the Domestic Abuse statutory guidance 2024 for further definitions and details on Domestic Abuse.

Purpose of policy
This policy covers the internal and external support available to employees experiencing, or involved in, domestic abuse. Everyone has the right to live free from abuse in any form and the responsibility for abuse lies with the perpetrator. There is an increased awareness of the prevalence of domestic abuse in society, and the settings understands that there may be colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who want to support friends, colleagues or family members who are going through it.

It can be rare that an employee will simply divulge that they are the victim of domestic abuse and the signs can show themselves in many different ways.
Although physical violence is a visible sign of domestic abuse, the abuse may not be physical. It is therefore vital that all of us be aware of possible signs that may point to a problem of this nature. All managers and colleagues need to be alert to those around them and feel confident about raising issues in a sensitive manner if they become concerned for a colleague. The more supportive an atmosphere that exists within the team / service the more likely it is that an individual will feel comfortable disclosing an issue of domestic abuse.
Each individual suffering abuse will require support in a way that suits their particular needs. A 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate in these circumstances. Therefore, managers are not expected to be experts but are required to know how to respond and how to signpost an employee to the support available. It is important that if a manager suspects there may be something wrong that they feel able to open up a conversation and not to wait until the employee raises the issue. The employee may never raise the issue or may do so only when things have escalated to a dangerous level.

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In no means by adopting this policy, do we as a setting, management or staff presume to fully understand the unique & personal circumstances that a person living or leaving domestic abuse can have experienced and will not presume or expect a particular outcome or response. This guideline is to aide and support both the person of concern and the management team to begin a conversation around what support can enable the person to remain in the workplace as safely as possible.

At Manea Pre-school the named Domestic Abuse Lead is Nicky Froggatt
The Domestic Abuse lead/s undertake appropriate training on a regular basis to be effective in offering guidance and support.

Points to be considered
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 an employee. Possible signs of domestic abuse include:

- Regular interruptions from a current or ex-partner/family member at work including phone calls, texts, emails and turning up at the workplace or at external events. Employees may feel they must respond immediately to these interruptions for fear of retribution.
- Gifts sent to an employee by current or ex-partner for no apparent reason.
- An employee displaying defensive behaviour or being overly secretive about their private life.
- Regular or sudden absenteeism including medical problems or arriving late/leaving work early without explanation.
- Obsession with leaving work on time.
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
- An employee appearing isolated from family and social networks.
- Sudden and sustained changes in behaviour or performance at work (e.g., becoming quiet, withdrawn, emotional, or angry).
- Reduced quantity or quality of work.
- Lack of or monitoring of access to the internet and/or work equipment when working from home.
- Depression, insomnia, or fatigue.
- Substance use/dependence, which may be used to cope with the abuse.
- Changes in appearance which could include heavy clothing in the summer, long sleeves, and/or heavy makeup, which may be used to cover injuries.
- Injuries with inconsistent or no explanation.
- An employee not wanting to engage with colleagues, including during lunch breaks and on social occasions.
- Insufficient resources, which may indicate financial abuse.
- Uncharacteristic change in religious or cultural behaviour at the request of a partner.

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 colleagues when they are absent from work:
- Trying to deal with the abuse and fearing their own safety:
- Being unaware of the abuse or not knowing how to help:
- An overall impact on team dynamics, working relationships and behaviours in the workplace.

The impact of domestic abuse on the employer may include;

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

The setting expects all employees to report their concerns if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse. In the first instance, they should speak to their manager about their concerns in confidence.

Whilst we recognise that employees may not feel able to disclose their personal living situation, we understand that the support we can offer will be in place regardless of a disclosure but with the hope that the employee will be working collectively with the setting and/or a specific staff members for ongoing support and to enable the setting to be proactive in helping the employee to gain the upmost from their position.

This may be in the form of adapting working arrangements- a change in working hours, work location (where possible when we have more than one setting) or other temporary measures may be possible. Full consideration will be given to security arrangements for you, such as screening telephone calls and not giving information about your work arrangements to callers. In some cases, it may be possible to consider redeployment from your existing job on a temporary basis if this is practical.

We recognise that domestic abuse may have a negative impact on your performance at work. You will not be discriminated against because of domestic abuse. It is important that you discuss any difficulties with your line manager or HR in order that support and guidance can be offered.

Confidentiality

Where an employee has discussions with their manager or such like that they are experiencing domestic abuse, confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible in line with Company procedures. There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These circumstances occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, where high risk to safety has been identified, or where we need to act to protect the safety of members of the public, including other colleagues.

Where an individual or family members are in genuine danger this may be reported to the police. This will be subject to prior discussion with the employee wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Personal data will be stored in accordance with the Company's data protection policy.[1]

Operation Encompass is a national initiative to enhance communication between the police and schools where a child is at risk from domestic abuse. Settings will be informed when the police have attended an incident of domestic abuse, where incidents have occurred in the homes of their pupils, regardless of level of risk.

Where a child attends an early years setting, the Education Navigator will phone the setting in the first instance to confirm the child is attending and to check the setting is aware of Operation Encompass. The Education Navigator will provide a verbal summary of the incident and follow this with an email confirming the details, in line with the information shared with schools. This will include Staff's own children.

[1] Note to Company – please include hyperlink to current data protection policy. Note that disclosures about domestic abuse should not be kept in an employee's personal record (e.g., within an HR system) unless linked to their employment (for example, if it forms part of a disciplinary disclosure, or if a perpetrator of domestic abuse is on bail / suspended from work because of domestic abuse.)

By knowing that the child has had this experience, settings and schools are in a better position to understand and be supportive of the child's needs and possible resulting behaviours.

Time off
You may need time off from work to attend counselling session or court hearing or to make alternative living arrangements. The setting will discuss how this can be accommodated to support you in these tasks and ensure the setting remains working to the highest child: adult ratios.

Crisis planning-
There may be a time when you have to leave your home in a hurry. It is helpful to have already thought about how you would do it and have a plan ready to help you feel more in control. The following advice may be useful to you;

- *Find somewhere you can quickly use the phone*
- *Carry with you a set of emergency telephone numbers*
- *Try to have some money aside for the bus or taxi*
- *Obtain an extra set of keys for your home*
- *Try to keep an emergency bag packed.*
- *Have a checklist of important numbers such as passport, driving licence, credit cards etc.*

Disclosure of your personal details-
We recognise that by listing you as a member of staff within the setting may increase your anxiety or level of danger to outside influences. Upon request we will not divulge your name and role upon our website, or at a request. An alternative name can be used within the workplace at your request and we will ensure confidentiality with those privy to your legal name.

Consideration to work arrangements & reasonable adjustments-
We recognise that you may need to change your working arrangements such as days and times, shifts, routines, including your journey to and from work which may affect your arrival time for example. We will support you to find a suitable alternative in these cases and collectively come to an arrangement on what would be the safest and supportive to both yourself and the settings

Key professionals and contact-
We maintain confidentiality at all times and it may be worth considering sharing with a trusted adult within your organisation a number of key contacts, such as IDVA you have been working with, a family friend or trusted relative that can be contacted should your employee be unable to verify your wellbeing or be concerned about your ongoing wellbeing.

Training opportunities-
We recognise that training within and outside of work may be difficult to facilitate if you are held accountable for your time and location for safety, we recommend that you discuss this with us to ensure we can accommodate this as best as possible and ensure that your statutory training remains up to date and effective.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse
The Company will not tolerate or condone domestic abuse, regardless of the identity or seniority of the perpetrator. If the Company becomes aware that an employee is or may be perpetrating domestic abuse, it will take appropriate action, which could include disciplinary action under the organisation's disciplinary policy.
Any domestic abuse that endangers another employee or uses Company equipment to inflict that abuse, such as mobile phones or laptops, may result in disciplinary action under the

Company's disciplinary policy up to and including dismissal for Gross Misconduct. Disciplinary action may be appropriate in some circumstances even where the perpetrator's behaviour takes place outside work.

The Company recognises that in some cases it may be appropriate to signpost to specialist services employees who disclose that they themselves are perpetrators of domestic abuse and who genuinely want to change their behaviour. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Support for managers-

As stated previously while, as a manger, you are there to support the employee and offer them signposting, it is not your role to 'solve' the problem. Issues such as these are complex and will only be successfully addressed by appropriate professional intervention. As a manager you must not feel that it is your responsibility to take the weight of the employee's difficulties on your shoulders. It can be extremely distressing listening to revelations from an employee and feeling unable to make the situation right. This can cause you stress and impact on your own mental health. In addition, the desire to help could cloud your judgement and make you take decisions that place your personal safety at risk. We do not want to see either of those things happen and as a manager you need to ensure that you find avenues of support (while maintaining confidentiality) to help you, while you in turn, provide support to your employee. Please make use of the support available as it is crucially important that you look after your own wellbeing as you will not be of benefit to your team member if the situation takes a toll on your own mental health.

- Key support and signposting-

The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance has a wealth of information from page *47 to p*5* including telephone numbers and websites. A copy of the Statutory guidance can be found …….

Safe spaces within the community are located closest to the setting at ……..

And the IDVA service can be contacted with a professional referral from the setting via the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership. Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership - Home (cambsdasv.org.uk)