



# Domestic Violence Policy

## BASE Academy Trust

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## Version Control

Current version	Previous version	Summary of changes made
01 Sep 23	01 Sep 13	Sections renumbered. Formatting of paragraphs, headings and appendices standardised. Section 5 updated to reflect changes to occupation health.

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 BASE Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that we will treat the matter supportively and confidentially.
- 1.2 Incidents of domestic violence are common and have a serious impact on those who experience them. Studies have consistently demonstrated the prevalence of domestic violence with an estimated 1 in 10 women nationally experiencing domestic violence each year.
- 1.3 Many people experiencing domestic violence do not seek help and this remains a 'hidden crime'. The impact of domestic violence in terms of its effects and costs within the workplace remain largely concealed and unidentified by most employers. Research has shown that a significant proportion of people who experience domestic violence had to take time off work. Many other people also reported symptoms that had a long-term effect on their work performance such as depression, anxiety, or stress.
- 1.4 Domestic violence is therefore not just an issue for agencies that provide services directly to the public. It is an issue that affects all sections of society.
- 1.5 It is important therefore, that we develop clear and effective responses to help minimise the impact of domestic violence on School employees.
- 1.6 The following guidelines have been produced in line with existing school policies and procedures, to help Head Teachers and Governing Bodies deal with these issues appropriately.
- 1.7 For the purposes of this guidance the following Home Office definition applies;

**Domestic Violence includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships.**

**People experience domestic violence regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, sexuality and lifestyle. The abuse can begin at any time - in new relationships or after many years spent together.**

**Domestic Violence can take many forms such as physical assault, sexual abuse, rape and threats. In addition, it may include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, and disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment.**

Taken from "Domestic Violence: Break the Chain", Home Office, Jan 1999

- 1.8 Whilst it is overwhelmingly women who experience domestic violence, these guidelines apply equally to any employee who requires help and advice about violence to themselves or within the home.

## 2 Identifying the problem

- 2.1 It is unlikely that an employee who experiences domestic violence will tell people at work of their situation or approach their Head Teacher and Governing Body with their problems in the first instance.
- 2.2 It is far more likely that the Head Teacher and Governing Body will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as absence monitoring, poor performance or changes in behaviour.
- 2.3 As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will enable appropriate help to be accessed. This in turn could mean that the member of staff is able to deal with their situation far more effectively.
- 2.4 Head Teachers and Governing Bodies should adopt a sensitive and non-judgmental approach when dealing with employees who have experienced domestic violence. Whilst the information disclosed may be very distressing and cause you to wish to be actively involved it is essential that any action taken is within the framework of the policy and uses the support mechanisms and agencies identified.
- 2.5 This should include;
  - Taking the issue seriously, taking time to listen to the employee.
  - Ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in privacy and that you respect their confidentiality as far as possible.
  - Understanding that the member of staff may not wish to approach their Head Teacher or Governing Body, and may prefer to involve a third party such as a colleague, trade union representative or contact officer. It may be appropriate to offer the option of speaking to a contact officer or HR Adviser who will be able to advise the employee and their Head Teacher or Governing Body on what support may be sought.
  - If an employee does not wish to speak to their Head Teacher or Governing Body, they should be advised of the difficulties which may arise if the Head Teacher or Governing Body is not aware of the relevant facts and circumstances (for instance if there is a potential health and safety issue or if other action is being taken on performance or absence monitoring).
  - Being aware that there may be additional issues faced by the employee because of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, disability etc. There are agencies that can help on specific issues. Contact details in [Appendix A](#).
  - The employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process. Research has shown that it can take a long time to break free of a violent relationship. You should not assume therefore, that because an individual returns or stays in a violent relationship that the violence was not severe or did not take place.
  - Being aware that if someone approaches you and advises you that they intend to flee to a place of safety that day that you may refer them to Homeless Welfare for immediate support. In these circumstances it would be appropriate to approve special leave in accordance with the local conditions of service.

- Being aware of what support is available and explore these options with the employee. However, if the employee does not want to contact other agencies, you must respect their wishes.

### 3 Ensuring safety

- 3.1 The responsibilities of employers, employees and others for the health and safety of persons at work are defined by the [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) and associated regulations and codes of practice.
- 3.2 The school has developed guidance for the Head Teacher and Governing Body to deal with incidents where an employee is verbally abused, threatened or physically assaulted in the course of their duties.
- 3.3 The strategies outlined in the Violence to Employees Policy will apply to most situations of violence in the workplace. However, the Head Teacher or Governing Body may have to consider additional factors if these incidents involve domestic violence. These incidents may involve violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, or intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator.
- 3.4 Examples of how these issues might be addressed include the following measures;
  - Improving security measures, such as changing key pad numbers or ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised staff only.
  - Reminding reception staff not to divulge information about employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or work patterns. In the event of enquiries from other agencies these should be responded to by the line manager on a 'ring back' basis.
  - Wherever practical offering temporary or permanent changes in workplace, work times and patterns, helping to make the employee less at risk at work and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the school workplace to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows.
  - Wherever practical offering changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in reception area, or in exceptional circumstances, redeployment to another post if an alternative is not easily found.
  - Agreeing what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Providing colleagues or care takers/site managers with a photograph of the abuser and other relevant details such as car registration numbers may help them to maintain security in the workplace.
  - Making sure that the systems for recording staff whereabouts during the day are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the office, considering if this poses any additional risks.
  - Recording any incidents of harassment or violence in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, emails or visits, to an employee by their partner or ex-partner. You should also take down details of any witnesses to these incidents. These records could be used if the employee wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator. In the event that the actions of an alleged perpetrator of domestic violence impinges on the health and safety of

staff within or near the workplace then the employer could also apply for an injunction.

- 3.5 The Head Teacher and Governing Body may have to take into account whether the above measures are operationally appropriate. However, ensuring that employees are safe should be of primary consideration throughout this process. In the event that employees within the work place are in imminent danger then the police should be called immediately (using 999).

## **4 Confidentiality**

- 4.1 Once an employee has confided to the Head Teacher or Governing Body that they are experiencing domestic violence, the Head Teacher or Governing Body should reassure them that they will keep this confidential as far as possible.
- 4.2 An exception to this is where child protection issues arise, for instance, if an employee gives information that suggests that their child or another child is at risk from abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect).
- 4.3 In this instance, the Head Teacher or Governing Body should inform the employee that they are seeking further advice the Child Protection Unit and that they will have a duty to pass information to this department.
- 4.4 Head Teachers and Governing Bodies have a duty to maintain a secure environment for all staff and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks. However, it is essential that you agree with the individual concerned what information to tell colleagues.
- 4.5 You should remind staff that this information is confidential and any unauthorised breaches of this could be subject to disciplinary action being taken. Under no circumstances should information in respect of changed work location or home address be divulged without the express consent of the employee.
- 4.6 The consequences of breaching confidentiality could have serious effects for the person experiencing domestic violence. Statistics have shown that the risk of more serious assaults, permanent injury and murder takes place when a woman decides to leave home or immediately after. It is important therefore, not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of violence is exaggerated.

## **5 Supportive measures**

- 5.1 The Local Conditions of Service has provision to allow both paid and unpaid leave for domestic reasons. Head Teachers and Governing Bodies should look sympathetically at requests for reasonable time-off for employees who have disclosed that they are experiencing domestic violence. Each case will be treated on its merit and advice should be sought from the HR Adviser.
- 5.2 Head Teachers and Governing Bodies may receive requests for time-off from employees who are experiencing domestic violence, to arrange appointments during the normal working day. These requests should be treated supportively.

- 5.3 These appointments could include;
- appointments with support agencies such as Women's Aid, Social Services or counsellors
  - arranging re-housing
  - meetings with solicitors
  - making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools
- 5.4 Head Teachers and Governing Bodies should also explore other measures supportively, such as temporary negotiated hours, where requested by employees experiencing domestic violence.
- 5.5 Employees are entitled to special leave to attend hearings as a prosecution witness in the criminal courts. If an individual is required to attend a hearing as a witness in either the civil or criminal courts (and has been called under a subpoena or a witness summons) then a witness allowance may be claimed from the court.
- 5.6 In the event that an individual has been allowed time off work to attend such a hearing then pay will be reduced to reflect the amount of any allowance received. Additionally, if there are circumstances where an employee is attending court and is seeking an injunction, or order, in cases of violence or harassment, time-off with pay may be considered.
- 5.7 Head Teachers should record absences or applications for special leave which relate to domestic violence in accordance with normal school procedures. These incidents should be treated and recorded as confidential.
- 5.8 Individuals leaving a violent partner may face considerable financial hardship or have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their family.
- 5.9 HR advice should be sought about what appropriate measures can be taken to help employees in these circumstances, for example referring employees to Homeless Welfare for crisis accommodation, support and advice.
- 5.10 A referral may be made to a Credit Union for confidential and sympathetic financial advice. Such referrals can be made regardless of whether the employee is an existing member of the Credit Union.
- 5.11 There are, however, certain criteria which must be satisfied to access financial assistance from a Credit Union. Additional free advice and support can also be sought from the Consumer Credit Counselling Service.
- 5.12 If the employee has disclosed that their partner has access to their finances or is exerting economic pressure upon them, School's HR and Exchequer Services should be approached to change the method of salary payment.
- 5.13 In exceptional circumstances a limited advance of salary might be considered. HR Children's Services advice should be sought in connection with this.
- 5.14 If appropriate and with the employee's consent, referring the employee to your occupational health provider.



## **6 What to do if a school employee is a perpetrator of violence**

- 6.1 Employees should be aware that domestic violence is a serious matter that can lead to criminal convictions.
- 6.2 Conduct outside of work (whether it leads to a criminal conviction or not) can also lead to disciplinary action against an employee because of its employment implications, and because it undermines the confidence the school (as employer) has in the employee.
- 6.3 There should be an investigation of the facts as far as possible, a view taken and consideration whether the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant instituting the disciplinary procedures. School's HR advice should be sought.
- 6.4 In addition such conduct may make certain job duties inappropriate. For example, it would not be appropriate for a perpetrator of domestic violence to be providing services to vulnerable people and children, and a change of duties or a transfer will need to be considered in such circumstances.
- 6.5 Similarly, proven harassment and intimidation of school employees by their partner or ex-partner who also works for the school or Local Authority will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.
- 6.6 If any of the circumstances set out in this section are brought to a Head Teacher or Governing Bodies attention, School's HR advice should be sought in the first instance.
- 6.7 Should a Head Teacher or Governing Body become aware of child protection concerns when informed that an employee has been a perpetrator of domestic violence then there is a duty to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer ('LADO') on 01204 337474.

## **7 Raising awareness**

- 7.1 The school is committed to tackling the issues of domestic violence. It is essential therefore that the working environment promotes the view that violence within or outside the workplace is unacceptable and will not be condoned nor made the subject of jokes or graphics.
- 7.2 The school will aim to raise awareness through the following measures:
  - preparation and distribution of information publicising the issue and the School's policy
  - briefings to senior management team and other appropriate line managers and supervisors
  - inclusion of issues relating to domestic violence in relevant in-house training sessions and as part of the school's induction
  - specialised training or briefing sessions for designated contact officers to ensure they understand their role
  - publicising the role of the contact officers to the School workforce

# Contact details for local support agencies

Accommodation		
Fortalice	01204 365677	Crisis accommodation – women’s refuge
Homeless Welfare	01204 335830	Bolton at Home – emergency accommodation – re-housing and Advice. First point of contact by phone Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm for support and information re other agencies as appropriate. Call in person by appointment 9am to 12noon or drop in 2pm to 4pm
Housing Advice	01204 335900	Advice and support service - Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and Thursday 9am to 7pm.

Crisis intervention		
Fortalice	01204 701846 (24 hours)	Bolton Women’s Aid Emergency Accommodation and Support Group

Financial advice		
Stepchange	0800 138 1111 <a href="http://www.stepchange.org">www.stepchange.org</a>	For free independent counselling to help you solve your debt problem, avoid bankruptcy and learn to handle money.

Health services		
If injured go to Accident and Emergency.		
NHS Direct	111	Confidential advice on all aspects of health.

Domestic violence		
For immediate help in an emergency call the Police 999.		
Greater Manchester Police Domestic Violence Unit	101	Domestic Violence Coordinators are police officers who have undertaken training concerning domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Coordinators offer advice and information about what the police can do to help, without asking for your name and address.
Women’s Domestic Abuse Helpline	0161 636 7525 <a href="http://www.endthefear.co.uk">www.endthefear.co.uk</a>	Anybody who is experiencing domestic or sexual violence can find help, support and advice here

## Children's Services

Children's Services can offer support to those experiencing domestic violence and their children. This might include assisting with accommodation, family support, access to counselling and (in certain circumstances) could include financial support or assistance with day care.

Emergency Duty Team	6pm to 9am	01204 337777
Duty Social Worker	West District (Blackrod, Deane cum Heaton, Halliwell, Smithills, Hulton Park, Horwich and Westhoughton)	01942 634625
	North (Astley Bridge, Bradshaw, Brightmet, Bromley Cross, Tonge Moor and Derby)	01204 337408
	South (Burnden, Daubhill, Farnworth, Harper Green, Kearsley and Little Lever)	01204 337729

## Telephone Advice

Childline	0800 1111	24 hour free national helpline for children in trouble or danger
Citizens Advice Bureau	0870 126 4038	24 hour answer phone service. Office opens Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4pm, Thursday 1pm to 7pm
Fortalice	01204 365677 01204 701846 (24 hours)	Advice, counselling and support, weekly drop in
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327	Help for men in violent relationships
Manchester Gay and Lesbian Switchboard	0161 274 3999	Advice and support 4pm to 10pm (7 days)
Phoenix Project	01204 848966	Safe and confidential support service for Asian women and children
Probation Service	01204 387699	Advice and Support
Rape Crisis Helpline	0808 802 9999	Confidential counselling and support service Mondays and Wednesdays 6pm to 9pm, Fridays 2pm to 5pm and Sundays 12noon to 3pm
Samaritans (Bolton)	01204 521200	24 hours
Victim Support	01204 399736	A confidential counselling and support service offering emotional and practical support based on the requirements of the individual who contacts Victim Support. Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm
Witness Support	0161 793 7333	Support through the Court process
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 200 0247	Advice, counselling and support Monday to Friday – 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

The details of the above agencies were correct at time of writing.