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Academy - Domestic Abuse Policy

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Domestic Abuse Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As the employer of staff in our Academies, Northern Education Trust (NET) recognises the statutory responsibilities related to employment. Day to day management of staff is delegated to the Principal and line managers in each Academy. Throughout this document reference is made to the responsibilities held by the Governing Body/Principal for operational purposes. Ultimate responsibility rests with the Trust.
- 1.2 The Trust and the Governing Body of XXXXXXXXX is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. It is committed to the welfare of its employees and seeks to support and assist any employee who is experiencing problems related to domestic abuse.
- 1.3 The term “domestic abuse” usually refers to violence and abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and/or financial) perpetrated within current or former relationships for the purpose of gaining power and control over someone. In addition, it may include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment. The abuse can be actual, threatened or attempted.
- 1.4 The Trust and the Governing Body recognises that domestic abuse exists in all social classes, racial, ethnic, religious and cultural groups and that it can be experienced at any age and irrespective of factors such as sexuality, marital status and disability. Whilst it may seem that domestic abuse is a personal matter, the Governing Body understand and recognise, that for those experiencing it, domestic abuse will affect their whole lives, including work and job performance.
- 1.5 This Policy was ratified by the Trustees on XXDATEXX following consultation with Trade Unions. It will be reviewed from time to time in full consultation with Trade Unions.

2. Aims

- 2.1 This policy forms part of the ongoing commitment to promoting dignity at work and both the Trust and Governing Body’s responsibility for health, safety and welfare at work for all employees.
- 2.2 The policy aims to:
 - 2.2.1 Demonstrate the Trust and Governing Body’s commitment to, and support for employees experiencing domestic abuse;
 - 2.2.2 Raise awareness of domestic abuse, what forms it can take and its likely effects on employees of the Trust;
 - 2.2.3 Contribute to the health and well being of all employees in order that they can enjoy fulfilling lives both at work and home by providing the appropriate advice and support;
 - 2.2.4 Raise awareness of all staff in recognising that an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse and to provide advice about appropriate action to take;
 - 2.2.5 Minimise the risk to employees from domestic abuse whilst at work;

2.2.6 Offer clear and consistent advice to employees experiencing domestic abuse.

3. The Governing Body

3.1 The Governing Body shall:

3.1.1 Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that recognise and deal with the issue of domestic abuse.

3.1.2 Ensure that all employees have access to this policy and that new employees are made aware of it.

3.1.3 Actively demonstrate recognition of domestic abuse problems by creating an environment where staff feel comfortable in asking for help.

3.1.4 Enlist the support of the Trust HR function and Occupational Health when appropriate and ensure staff have access to this support and any other relevant agencies.

4. The Principal/Line Managers

4.1 The Principal/Line Managers shall:

4.1.1 Be familiar with this policy and guidelines and ensure that employees understand the policy and their own responsibilities.

4.1.2 Be aware of the signs of domestic abuse and the effects on performance, attendance and health of employees.

4.1.3 Ensure that staff understand the policy and are aware of the support and assistance available.

4.1.4 Liaise with the Trust HR function to refer staff to Occupational Health or Counselling when there are concerns or absence due to domestic abuse.

4.1.5 Ensure the provision of all reasonable support to employees.

4.1.6 Seek advice where necessary from the Trust HR function on the approach to be adopted if they are aware or suspect an employee is suffering from domestic abuse.

5. Employees

5.1 Employees shall:

5.1.1 Co-operate with management in ensuring the implementation of this policy.

5.1.2 Be encouraged to seek help from the Principal/Line Manager if they have concerns regarding domestic abuse.

5.1.3 Encourage a colleague who they suspect is a victim of domestic abuse to seek help.

6. The Trust HR Function

6.1 The Trust HR Function shall:

- 6.1.1 Provide the necessary professional advice and support to the Governing Body and all Academy staff when required.
- 6.1.2 Assist and advise on referral of staff to Occupational Health or Counselling or signpost to other local agencies when appropriate.

7. Possible Indicators of Domestic Abuse

- 7.1 The following indicators can be signs of possible domestic abuse, although it is important to note these can also be innocent in nature, or caused by other factors such as stress, physical illness, mental health problems or the effects of prescription drugs.
 - Coming to work repeatedly with injuries
 - An unusual number of phone calls from home and strong reaction to the calls
 - Late for work and needing to leave early
 - Secretive about home life
 - Frequent absenteeism
 - Emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous or confused
 - Partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life
 - Partner makes demands over their work schedule
 - May be extremely passive or aggressive
 - May seem chronically depressed or depressed in cycles
 - May isolate themselves at work

These are just a few characteristics. People will react in different ways so a more important sign is when an individual behaves in a way that is unusual for them.

8. Support

- 8.1 An employee who is experiencing domestic abuse may inform someone in the Academy of their situation. It may also be the case that the Principal/Line Manager becomes aware of the situation through associated issues such as absence monitoring or poor performance. Identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered. This in turn could mean that the member of staff is able to deal with their situation more effectively.
- 8.2 The Principal/Line Managers need to have a sensitive and non-judgemental approach when dealing with employees who are experiencing domestic abuse to explore what support is available, and support the employee in whatever they then decide to do. However, a specific course of action cannot be insisted upon.
- 8.3 Support will include:
 - 8.3.1 The Principal/Line Manager taking time to listen to the employee and believing what they tell them. Domestic abuse is chronically under-reported, but research shows that domestic abuse accounts for 25% of reported violent crime.
 - 8.3.2 Ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in private and that confidentiality is respected (the exceptions to this are if information disclosed indicates that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering harm, there is risk of harm to a vulnerable adult or where there is risk to an employee in the workplace).

- 8.3.3 Being non-judgemental – 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 resolve or leave a violent relationship. It should not be assumed therefore, that because an individual stays in, or returns to a violent relationship that the violence is not severe or does not take place.
 - 8.3.4 Raising awareness of the free support that is available and explore those options with the employee, (there are local support agencies for both men and women; see national agencies contact details at appendix 1).
 - 8.3.5 Treating requests to time off from employees who are experiencing domestic abuse sympathetically. These requests could include appointments with support agencies, arranging re-housing, meetings with solicitors and making alternative child care arrangements. Whilst every effort should be made by the employee for these appointments not to impact on timetabled teaching time, it is recognised that at times this is unavoidable – and these requests should be considered sympathetically and reasonable time off with pay should be granted where possible. Additionally, if there are circumstances where an employee is attending court and is seeking an injunction or order in cases of violence or harassment, reasonable time off with pay should be granted. Where an employee is called as a witness up to two days paid leave may be granted, an employee should submit any loss of earnings to the court which will be topped up to normal pay by the Academy.
 - 8.3.6 Support can also be offered via an employee's trade union representative.
- 8.4 Individuals leaving an abusive relationship may face considerable financial hardship or have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. Advice should be sought from the Trust HR function about what appropriate measures can be taken to help employees in these circumstances, for example referring employees to appropriate agencies for confidential and sympathetic financial advice and assistance. If an employee discloses that their partner has access to their finances or is exerting economic pressure on them, the employee may approach the payroll section to request a change to the method of salary payment.
 - 8.5 If an employee does not wish to speak to the Principal/Line Manager and there are potential performance, health and safety or absence issues, the employee should be advised that the relevant support can only be given on the facts known and there may be potential implications on the employee's employment if the issues continue.

9. Minimising Risk in the Workplace

- 9.1 The Governing Body is committed to taking all reasonable steps to minimise the risks to safety of its employees. It is recognised that anyone experiencing domestic abuse is particularly vulnerable whilst at work, as once a victim has tried to leave an abusive relationship, the workplace may be the only place the perpetrator is able to locate them. 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.
- 9.2 A workplace risk assessment should be carried out by the Principal/Line Manager, in discussion with the employee, and consideration given to the following measures:
 - 9.2.1 Improvements to security measures, such as changing key pad numbers or ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised personnel only.

- 9.2.2 Reminding all staff not to divulge information about employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns including the location of staff when they are out of Academy.
- 9.2.3 Offering temporary or permanent changes in work times and patterns where possible, helping to make the employee less at risk at work and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to classrooms or office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows. Where possible offering temporary changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in reception area.
- 9.3.4 Agreeing what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Providing information to assist relevant staff maintain security in the workplace.
- 9.3.5 Making sure that the systems for recording staff whereabouts during the day are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the Academy, considering how risks can be minimised (e.g. changing duties or allowing another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys).
- 9.3.6 Recording any incidents of violence in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, e-mails or visits, to an employee by their partner/ex-partner. A note should be made 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. The Academy could also apply for an injunction if the actions of an alleged perpetrator impinges on the health and safety of staff. In situations involving physical violence at work anyone witnessing the incident should ensure it is reported to the police for the appropriate action to be taken.

10. Misconduct

- 10.1 Employees should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter that can lead to criminal convictions. Similarly, conduct outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) may also lead to disciplinary action against an employee because of its employment implications and because it may undermine the confidence the Trust/Academy has in the employee.
- 10.2 Harassment and intimidation by an employee of the Trust towards their partner or ex partner, regardless of where the partner/ex partner works will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Appendix 1

Useful National Agency Contact Details

Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO)

www.bawso.org.uk

Tel: 0800-731 8147

BAWSO are a specialist agency which can provide culturally sensitive and appropriate information and services to black and other minority ethnic groups.

Broken Rainbow

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Broken Rainbow provides support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic abuse.

Man Kind Initiative

www.mankind.org.uk

Tel: 01823 334244

The Man Kind Initiative is a national charity that provides help and support for male victims of domestic abuse.

Men's Advice Line

www.mensadvice.org.uk

0808 801 0327

The Men's Advice Line offers practical advice, information and support to male victims of domestic abuse as well as concerned friends and families.

National Centre for Domestic Violence

<http://www.ncdv.org.uk/>

Tel: 0844 8044 999

The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation.

Refuge

<http://www.refuge.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 2000 247

Refuge is one of the largest single providers of specialist accommodation and services to women and children escaping domestic violence, supporting over 1,000 women and children every day.

Southall Black Sisters

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Tel: 0208 571 0800

Southall Black Sisters provide advice and information on domestic abuse, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African and African- Caribbean women.

Women's Aid

<http://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 2000 247

Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk

Women's Aid is the national domestic abuse charity that helps up to 250,000 women and children every year. They work to end violence against women and children and support over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the country.

CONTACTS

For advice on the content of this policy please contact:

Judith Telford
HR Director
Northern Education Trust
jud.telford@northerneducationtrust.org
M: 07976 044539

Jessica Worthington
HR Manager
Northern Education Trust
jess.worthington@northerneducationtrust.org
M: 07714 245673

Helen Neary
HR Advisor
Northern Education Trust
helen.neary@northerneducationtrust.org
M: 07714 245678

Zoe Strike
Assistant HR Advisor
Northern Education Trust
zoe.strike@northerneducationtrust.org
M: 07715 671660

Katie Rose
Assistant HR Advisor
Northern Education Trust
Katie.rose@northerneducationtrust.org
M: 07715 655495

Employees are also encouraged to contact their trade union representative for advice and support where appropriate.