

Domestic Abuse Policy

Introduction

It is our policy at Elizabeth Finn Homes (EFH) that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with us in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically and confidentially. This policy also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees will be experiencing domestic abuse and that the workplace should be a place of safety and one that recognises that perpetrators of domestic abuse are responsible for their behaviour and for addressing this.

Through this domestic abuse policy and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we aim to create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

We recognise that domestic abuse can affect anyone, and we commit to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development.

This policy is part of our commitment to family friendly working and seeks to benefit the welfare of all employees, improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of us as an employer of choice.

Definition of Domestic Abuse

Domestic violence and abuse are best described as the use of physical and/or emotional abuse or violence, including undermining of self-confidence, sexual violence or the threat of violence, by any person, who is or has been in a close relationship with the victims/survivors, including abuse of parents or adult children. This policy is therefore applicable whatever the nature of the intimate relationship.

The UK government definition is:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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."

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- *Psychological*
- *Physical*
- *Sexual*
- *Financial*
- *Emotional*

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."

All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners.

- Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical ability.
- Once it has started it often becomes more frequent and more violent.
- It can severely affect children emotionally and physically.
- Victims/survivors are sometimes beaten or harassed by members of their immediate or extended family.
- Domestic abuse is gendered – the majority of perpetrators are men and between 80-95% of those who experience it are women, although it does also occur against men in mixed or same sex relationships.
- Domestic abuse is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victims/survivors. On average a victim/survivor of domestic abuse is assaulted 35 times before they report the matter to the police.

Identification of the problem at work

There are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim/survivor. These may include the following:

- the employee may confide in their colleagues/manager
- other employees may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse
- there may be obvious signs of physical abuse (it is important not to make assumption)
- abuse may come to light as a result of changes in performance or behaviour at work
- abuse may reveal itself as the reason for either poor attendance or presenteeism (because victims/survivors prefer to be at work rather than at home).

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Line managers should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.

We respect employees' right to privacy. While we strongly encourage victims/survivors of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, we will never force anyone to share this information if they do not want to.

Disclosure of abuse

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from the People Team, a manager, or colleague. Line managers and colleagues are not qualified to counsel or advise victims/survivors, but can provide information, workplace support, and signposting to other organisations.

The People Team can be confidentially contacted by email on Recruitment@elizabethfinn.co.uk or your People Business Partner's contact details are available on the communications board in your home.

Role of colleagues

We encourage all employees to report to a suitable manager if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. This does not have to be their line manager if they feel another manager is more

appropriate. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, we will ensure that person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

Confidentiality and right to privacy

Employees who disclose 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. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where we need to act to protect the safety of employees.

In circumstances where we have to breach confidentiality, we will seek specialist advice before doing so. If we decide to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, we will discuss with the employee why we are doing so and will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Support for individuals

We recognise that building a life free from abuse is usually a process not a single event, and we will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.

We and our representatives will work together co-operatively to help employees experiencing domestic abuse.

We will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any employee who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

Managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments
- temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- redeployment or relocation
- measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- using other existing policies, including flexible working

Line managers will respect the right of an employee to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage and should avoid being judgemental. It must be recognised that the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process.

Other existing provisions (including occupational health, independent counselling services) will also be signposted to employees as a means of help.

Financial support

Employees may be granted a pay advance, if the advance will help with the situation.

If the salary payment method is problematic, then employees can request a different method of payment.

Safety planning

We will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers may have to consider incidents such as violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive calls, intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator, and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning.

Organisational planning

All employees will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisal, leaflets and posters.

We will remind employees of the importance of not divulging personal details of other colleagues, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

Training

We are committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings or awareness raising sessions will ensure that all managers are able to:

- identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse
- respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner
- provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
- discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning
- signpost to other organisations and sources of support
- understand that they are not counsellors.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. We recognise that we have a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee approaches us about their abusive behaviour, we will provide information about the services and support available to them and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

We will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- disciplinary action by the employer
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk.

An individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to our Code of Conduct policy and procedure. We also reserve the right to consider the use of this policy should an employee's activities outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute.

In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in their current role(s). In these circumstances the possibility of redeployment into an alternative role may be considered.

We view the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the company's Code of Conduct for disciplinary purposes.

Our Code of Conduct is intended to inform all employees, irrespective of grade, of the standards of conduct expected of them. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which colleagues are expected to abide. Employees are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation.

If it becomes evident that an employee has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse, then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

If the victim/survivor and the perpetrator both work for the company

In cases where both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, we will take appropriate action.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor 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/survivor. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer systems or offices within the care homes.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating domestic abuse in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations appropriate support should be given.

Additional Support

All employees can access free, professional, and confidential counselling 24 hours a day through our Employee Assistance Programme. If you feel that you may benefit from such support, please call 0345 266 9667. You may be asked to confirm our policy number which is 02/CRE/0510893.

If an employee would prefer to speak to someone who is specially trained in domestic abuse, you can contact one of the specialist organisations listed at the end of this policy. The [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#) can also provide more information and links to where counselling can be provided.

External support networks

- [24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) – 0808 2000 247 – run by Refuge.
- [Women's Aid](#) 0117 944 44 11
- [Bright Sky App and Website](#) - a mobile app and website for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or wanting to help someone they know. Signposting to local support.
- [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#) 0800 970 2070.
- [Men's Advice Line](#) 0808 801 0327.
- [Mankind](#) 01823 334 244.
- [Galop](#) - supporting victims of domestic abuse in the LGBT+ community - 0800 999 5428
- Forced Marriage Unit - 020 7008 0151.
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#) – National Stalking Helpline – 0808 802 0300.
- [Respect Helpline](#) – for anyone worried about their own behaviour – 0800 802 4040.
- [Hestia Respond to Abuse Helpline](#) – a free resource for employers. Employers can call 020 3879. 3695 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or email advice@hestia.org for support, guidance or information about domestic abuse and how to support employees and colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.
- [CrimeStoppers](#) is an independent charity giving people the power to speak up about crime 100% anonymously. If you have information about those committing a crime, but do not want to reveal your identity, you can tell us what you know by phone on 0800 555 111 or online [here](#) 24/7 365 days a year.

Review date	Next Review Date
January 2025	January 2028