

## 1. Definitions

**Healthwatch:** refers to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

**Employees:** refers to all Healthwatch employees.

**Volunteers:** refers to all Healthwatch volunteers, including Directors.

## 2. Scope

This policy covers all employees, volunteers, and members of the public.

## 3. Summary

3.1 This policy describes our approach to tackling domestic against all people, including violence against women and girls.

3.2 Domestic abuse is complex, cruel and has a lasting impact on survivors and their families. Healthwatch recognises it is possible that its employees, volunteers (either at home or in the workplace) and amongst those members of the public we may encounter in our work, that there will be people who have been affected by:

- Domestic abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking.

3.3 With our employees working from home more since the COVID pandemic our role in raising awareness, spotting the symptoms, and tackling domestic abuse is even more important.

3.4 As a caring and responsible employer, we have a vital role to play as part of our duty of care towards employees and volunteers and because work might be the only place of respite for an employee or volunteer affected by domestic abuse. We want to show employees, volunteers and members of the public who are going through abuse, that they are not alone and that we can support them to get help. Our policy is intended to send a clear message that any form of domestic violence is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace and that we will support any employees or volunteer or member of the public who needs help.

3.5 This policy sets out:

- Our clear commitment to taking the issue seriously.
- The common signs of domestic abuse.

- The support available for employees and managers and members of the public.
- 3.6 This policy is supported by our policies on Health and Safety, Adults and Childrens Safeguarding, and Disciplinary Policy & Procedures. For details on other policies see the Additional Policies & Documents section at the end.
- 3.7 All employees and volunteers will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction process.
- 3.8 We have developed this policy using ‘**Domestic Abuse: a toolkit for employers**’ (<https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/domestic-abuse-toolkit>).

## 4. Legislation

- 4.1. Following the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Healthwatch has a legal duty of care to our employees and should:
- Look out for signs of domestic abuse.
  - Respond appropriately.
  - Support someone who is experiencing domestic abuse.
  - Keep a record of incidents at work and when employees report domestic abuse, and any actions taken.
- 4.2. For both disclosures and any concerns around potential perpetrators, we will record any incidents sensitivity and securely, being mindful of the need to ensure confidentiality. This may include keeping a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails, or visits to the employee.

## 5. Consequences of domestic abuse

### Violence against women:

- 5.1. According to the Office for National Statistics in 2019, one in three women aged 16 to 59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- 5.2. Violence against women is both a consequence of and a cause of inequality between men and women. As well as being a health problem of epidemic proportions, it's also a human rights problem of equal severity.
- 5.3. Depending on the violation, it can deprive a woman of:
- Her right to health and physical and mental integrity.
  - Her right to be free from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.
  - Her right to life. (source: Women’s Aid).

## Male victims:

- 5.4. Research states that nationally, about 1 in 6 heterosexual, men and 1 in 4 gay men will experience some form of domestic abuse or sexual violence in their lifetime.
- 5.5. Locally we know that commissioned domestic and sexual violence services report that around 8% of victims accessing services are male.
- 5.6. It can take over 25 years for a man to get help for an incidence such as childhood sexual abuse. This lack of specialist intervention and support can contribute to complex mental health issues and behaviours due to feelings of confusion, guilt and shame.
- 5.7. These not only affect the individual, but also their wider community through broader social issues such as:
  - Relationship difficulties.
  - Distant parenting.
  - Homelessness.
  - Substance misuse.
  - Antisocial behaviour and crime.

## 6. What is domestic abuse?

- 6.1. Domestic abuse refers to abusive behaviours which take place between two people aged over 16 who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships; or have a child together; or are relatives. The Domestic Abuse Act states that abuse can be a single incident, but is often a pattern of behaviours, and it takes many forms.
- 6.2. Men, women, and children can all experience domestic abuse, and perpetrators can be male or female, though women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and most perpetrators are men. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of social class, race, religion, gender identity, sexuality, or disability. Individuals who experience abuse are often affected by it long after they have left their partner.
- 6.3. Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of behaviour that is:
  - Controlling.
  - Coercive.
  - Threatening.
  - Degrading.

- Violent.
- 6.4. In most cases domestic abuse is caused by a partner or ex-partner. However, it can also be caused by family members or carers.
- 6.5. Domestic abuse is widespread. It is important to know that domestic abuse can be experienced by adults and children of all genders.
- 6.6. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to:
- Coercive control - a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence.
  - Psychological and/or emotional abuse.
  - Physical or sexual violence and abuse.
  - Economic abuse.
  - Harassment and stalking.
  - Online or digital abuse.
- 6.7. Children affected by domestic abuse are also victims whether they were present during violent incidents or not.
- 6.8. For more information about definitions of domestic abuse, see the Additional Resources section at the end.

### **Controlling behaviour:**

- 6.9. Controlling behaviour when an abuser uses a range of behaviours and tactics to make a person subordinate and/or dependent.
- 6.10. It includes:
- Keeping them apart from friends, help and support.
  - Exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain.
  - Taking advantage of their money and things they have - stopping their independence, resistance, and escape.
  - Controlling their everyday behaviour.

### **Coercive behaviour:**

- 6.11. Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or a pattern of acts used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
- 6.12. It includes:
- Assault.

- Threats.
- Humiliation.
- Intimidation.

## **Economic abuse:**

6.13. Economic abuse means any behaviour that may affect a person's ability:

- To receive, use, or maintain money or other property.
- Get goods or services.

## **7. How we can help**

7.1. For employees and volunteers, we will:

- Create a transparent open environment in which to discuss concerns so that employees and volunteers affected by domestic abuse will hopefully feel supported enough to acknowledge to themselves and us that their relationships are abusive or coercive.
- Advise them to contact the police, where we believe the person is at risk.
- Confirm the complete confidentiality of any disclosure.
- Find a way to communicate safely, for example by text message if calls are not possible, or a different email address if their email is being monitored by the perpetrator.
- Agree on a code word or hand signal for someone to use to alert others that they're experiencing domestic abuse. This is in line with the Home Office's ['Ask for ANI'](#) codeword scheme which continues to provide a simple and discreet way for domestic abuse victims to signal that they need immediate help using a codeword in participating pharmacies.
- Arrange another place they can do their work instead of at home.
- Be flexible around working hours.
- Provide time off, for example to attend support appointments. We will consider providing paid special leave to help a survivor.
- Help the person get other appropriate support by signposting them to support services listed in the Resources section of this policy.
- Agree with the individual any additional steps the business can take in the event of a disclosure, or if abuse is suspected. For example, diverting phone calls, emails, alerting reception employees, redirecting salaries.
- With the victim's agreement, alert reception if the abuser is known to come to the workplace.

- Check that employees have arrangements for getting safely to and from home.
- Ask individuals to supply us with an up-to-date emergency contact number for a trusted friend or family member.
- Make specific provision for those working from home by ensuring daily contact with at least one colleague.
- Identify training to ensure that the organisation has employees who know what steps to take to support colleagues.

7.2. For members of the public, we will:

- Take all concerns seriously.
- Advise people of the safe spaces that are available via the ANI scheme and provide them with details of participating [pharmacies](#). We will advise them to attend and say, 'Please can I speak to ANI' or ask to use a Safe Space ('Do you have a Safe Space available?').
- Advise them to contact the police, where we believe the person is at risk.
- Signpost them to support services listed in the Resources section of this policy.
- Raise awareness of domestic violence by promoting this and support available via social media channels, websites and newsletters.

## 8. Advice & Support for managers:

8.1. Managers should involve HR at an early stage for advice and support.

8.2. Managers and employees should read 'Respond to Abuse', Hestia's free Employer's Advice Line and digital tool – call 0203 8793695 or visit [hestia.org](https://www.hestia.org)

8.3. We will aid people's understanding of the issue by helping them to look out for potential signs that someone may be experiencing domestic abuse, including:

- **Work productivity:** changes in the person's working patterns e.g. frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work or meetings early; reduced quality and quantity of work, missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards; sending an increased number of hours at work for no reason or being anxious to get back to the office after lockdown; frequent visits to work by the employee's partner.
- **Changes in behaviour or demeanour:** conduct which is out of character with previous behaviour e.g., becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, or depressed; being isolated from colleagues; be secretive about their home life or give reasons not to turn the camera on when meeting online; being worried about leaving children at home.
- **Physical indicators:** e.g. visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations; change in the pattern or amount of makeup used;

change in the manner of dress e.g. clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries; substance use/misuse; fatigue/sleep disorders.

- We will ensure managers are trained to provide a non-judgmental and supportive environment. We will make it clear that it is not the role of a manager to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear through a workplace policy and its associated guidance that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.
- As a guide for managers, we will make it clear that any information should only be disclosed to anyone else if it is necessary in providing help and support and with the prior agreement of the person who has disclosed.
- We will also empower and support managers to take appropriate action against employees who are found to be perpetrators of domestic abuse where this amounts to misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. This recognises that we will not tolerate any forms of domestic abuse. At the same time, we recognise that abusers may need help to change their behaviour and will support managers to encourage employees to address violent and abusive behaviours of all kinds, including by connecting them with relevant frontline support services.
- Where a suspected perpetrator is an employee or volunteer, we will consider what potential impact the perpetrator's behaviour may have on other employees and volunteers. We will assess the risk and take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate the risk.

## 9. Resources and support

- 9.1. For more information on type of abuse: [domestic abuse definitions in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.](#)
- 9.2. **To report domestic violence and abuse to the police** [on the Sussex Police website](#), by phoning 101, or in person at your local police station.
- 9.3. **For help in an emergency:** If you or someone else is in immediate danger, phone 999 and ask for the police. If it is not safe for you to speak you can use the Silent Solution system - call 999, and if you don't speak you will be diverted to an automated system. You can then press 55 to be transferred to the local police force.
- 9.4. **Find out about your partner:** The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), or Clare's Law, is a way to find out if your partner has a history of domestic abuse and may pose a risk to you. [Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application](#)
- 9.5. **B&H Council Flexible Fund:** The Brighton & Hove Flexible Fund is for survivors who live in Brighton & Hove affected by domestic abuse.

- The main criterion for this payment is to help improve your housing situation. This can include costs for transport, white goods, and other emergency expenditure at short notice. A professional will need to apply for this money on your behalf. To request an application form, send an email to [VAWG.unit@brighton.hove.gov.uk](mailto:VAWG.unit@brighton.hove.gov.uk).
- 9.6. **Domestic and sexual violence and abuse, stalking and harassment and violence against women and girls:** For more information about what domestic and sexual violence and abuse, stalking and harassment and violence against women and girls is and how to get support visit the Council website.
- <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/community-safety-partnership/domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-stalking-and-harassment-and-violence-against-women-and-girls>
  - <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/community-safety-partnership/domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-stalking-and-harassment-and-violence-against-women-and-girls/support-employers-abuse-victims>
- 9.7. **Victim Support - The Brighton Domestic Abuse Specialist Service (DASS):** DASS offers (<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/resources/brighton-and-hove-domestic-abuse-specialist-service/>):
- A helpline service from 9am to 5pm for survivors, friends, family, and professionals.
  - A 24-hour Live chat and the 24 hour national Support line.
  - An Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) service for those at high risk of harm - with specialist provision for Children and Young people, those within BME communities and within health settings
  - Criminal court support.
  - Training.
  - Other drop-in services.
  - Professional consultancy.
- 9.8. **Hestia's [Bright Sky](#):** is a free to download mobile app and website for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.
- UK-wide directory of specialist domestic abuse support services.
  - Available in 5 languages: English, Urdu, Punjabi, Polish and Welsh.
  - Content to help you understand if you or someone else is at risk.
  - Information to help you stay safe online.
- 9.9. People experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse can also contact organisations including:



- [Rise](#) - offers practical help and support to people affected by domestic abuse.
- [Mankind](#) – for men affected by unwanted sexual experiences.
- [Refuge](#) – national domestic abuse charity, also provides a 24-hour helpline.
- [Women's Aid](#) – domestic abuse support for women and children.
- [Respect](#) – provides help for perpetrators.
- [Galop](#) – LGBT+ anti-violence charity.
- [Survivors network](#) - Help and support for survivors (all genders) of sexual violence, rape and childhood sexual abuse.
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- LGBT+ Domestic Violence Helpline: 0800 999 5428
- Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327
- Rape Crisis England & Wales: 0808 802 9999
- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300

## 10. Additional Policies & Documents

- 10.1. The Healthwatch policies and documents referred to in this policy are available on request by contacting the Healthwatch Team on 01273 234 040 or email to [policies@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:policies@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk).

Date Policy Reviewed	11 November 2024
At the 15 January 2024 meeting of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Board of Directors, the Board approved the recommendation to delegate authorisation of operational policies to the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch.	
Date Approved by the CEO	11 November 2024
Next Review Date	November 2026