

## Frequently asked questions

At NHSBT we would like employees to feel empowered and able to have open conversations if they believe they have been or are being subjected to domestic abuse or suspect that a colleague may be.

Our work to tackle domestic abuse is a long-term commitment. This document is provided for guidance and should be read in conjunction with the policy.

### 1. General Definitions

#### What is Domestic Abuse?

**1.1** The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as “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.” Domestic abuse is not a ‘one off’ occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victims/survivors. The following can be considered as types of abuse, but this list is not exhaustive:

- Psychological harm,
- Physical harm
- Harm related to Culture and Identity
- Sexual harm including all non-consensual activities
- Financial control
- Emotional control
- Harassment and stalking
- On-line abuse and other types of abuse through digital and social media.

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

### 2. Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse

#### 2.1 I am a victim of Domestic Abuse – what support can I get from NHSBT?

We have a commitment to ensure that you feel safe at work. If you tell us that you believe you are experiencing domestic abuse of some form, we will provide help and support to ensure you feel safe when you are at work. We will also consider how the situation may be impacting you.

If you seek support from your Manager, we will give them the information and tools to enable them to support you effectively.

With the help of HR and our safeguarding leads your Manager will give you an opportunity to discuss your situation with them in a private environment. In some circumstances your Manager may discuss the possibility of making contact with a specialist support agency. You may be able to do this independently or we can support you by making contact on your behalf. The external agency may decide that it is relevant to complete a risk assessment on your behalf (see [www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk](http://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk) for further information).

With your consent we will support you in identifying what actions can be taken to increase your personal safety at work as well as address any risks there may be to other colleagues, taking into

account the duty of care for all our employees. We will also consider other support that may help you when you are not in work.

We will consider a range of options to help you to cope and deal with the situation that you are facing. Every situation is unique and support will be based on individual needs. This can range from a one-off advice call to ongoing support.

In some situations there may be support offered or signposting to support networks inside and outside of NHSBT. Examples of support could include:

- the possibility of time off work, dependent on operational requirements, for relevant appointments with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments
- the opportunity to discuss a temporary or permanent change to working times and patterns
- consideration for changes to specific work duties, if appropriate, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- considerations for redeployment or relocation if this is a possibility and for reasons of employee safety
- additional measures to be put in place to ensure a safe working environment, for example, changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- using other existing policies to give additional support, including flexible working, time off work policy, etc. Access to the Employee Assistance Programme, details of this can be found on our [People First](#) pages.
- support from internal networks
- access to occupational health support/signposting to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- access to work facilities/resources such as buildings, IT/telephone access to give you the resources you may need and the privacy to access help.

You may wish to discuss what action or support you think you may need with your Manager or someone else you trust. Alternatively you may wish to raise a HR Direct query and a member of HR will contact you to discuss further. There may be situations where we must share the information you disclose to use and so we may not be able to guarantee absolute confidentiality.

### **3. Supporting victims of domestic abuse as a Manager or colleague**

#### **3.1 I am a Manager – what do I do if a team member informs me that they are a domestic abuse victim?**

It is important that Managers are knowledgeable about domestic abuse as they are ideally placed to offer key support to those who may be experiencing it.

Most importantly though, employees need to be made aware of the policy and how to access support if they need it. Managers' support can be made up of four steps:

- Recognise the problem
- Respond appropriately to disclosure
- Provide support
- Refer to the appropriate help

If a team member approaches you and informs you that they are being subjected to domestic abuse give them the opportunity to have a confidential discussion with you in a private setting. They may be going through a mix of emotions and may find it difficult to share with you what they are going through and the circumstances they are facing. You may need to seek support from a member of the HR or safeguarding team who will help you to decide on the next steps in supporting your team member.

When opening up a conversation with your team member try to find an informal setting. Be clear about confidentiality, ask open questions and listen without judgement to what they are telling you. Be careful not to show surprise or shock at what you are being told and try to avoid making any opinions or giving advice.

### **3.2 What can I do as a Manager in supporting my team member to get the assistance they need?**

- Agree with your team member what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the alleged perpetrator telephones or visits the workplace
- Discuss whether a change in work pattern may need to be considered, a change in location or workload as and when they need it
- Consider practical solutions to help protect the employee such as password protecting work timetables/appointments to avoid their ex-partner monitoring their timetable;
- Consider allowing time to facilitate any practical arrangements or medical appointments.
- If a colleague spends time working from home consider options of allowing them to attend NHSBT premises to enable them to work in a safe environment.
- Consider changing work email address or telephone numbers or diverting their phone calls and emails.
- Notify reception and security staff of any safeguarding plans that they need to be aware of
- Check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
- Be led by your employee and consider if they may need to redirect their salary or amend their personal information, such as addresses or healthcare details
- Where practical, consider offering a temporary or permanent change of workplace
- Where practical, offer changes in specific duties.

Speak to your local HR Consultant – they are there to offer guidance and support.

### **3.3 What other things do I need to consider?**

Line Managers may have to consider incidents such as an alleged perpetrator visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator, and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning. You can access support with this via HR Direct who will put you in touch with a member of the HR, safeguarding or Health and Safety team.

When discussing a safety plan with your team member you could consider appropriate ways of keeping them safe in work. Examples could include:

- Avoiding lone working
- Allowing a home-working employee to work from a workplace
- Consider temporary adjustment of hours or working pattern
- Alerting facilities and the security team to any plans so that they are aware
- Checking next of kin details and any other contacts you may have
- Offering IT support to ensure personal data is secure and confidential
- Briefing other colleagues (if appropriate) on any plans they need to be aware of (with the consent of your team member).
- Having a check in on a regular basis
- Agreeing who and how (NHSBT / Manager) contact can be made in case of emergency if we were unable to get in touch
- Agreeing a plan for escalation to emergency services if unable to confirm safety
- Discussing whether there is an immediate safety plan should abuse escalate at home.
- Signpost to specialist agencies who are able to help with this as needed.
- keeping a record locally of any agreed plan and/or refer to HR Direct where a record of the contact would be kept.
- Considering support for commuting to and from work

### **3.4 I have a colleague who has confided in me that they are being subjected to domestic abuse – what should I do?**

If a colleague confides in you and asks you to keep it a secret it is difficult to know what to do next. However, there are certain situations where we all have a duty to raise a concern if it involves the safety of another individual. In the first instance have a confidential conversation with your line Manager or contact HR Direct who will help support you to make a decision on the best possible next steps. You may be able to have a conversation confidentially without divulging the name of

the colleague in the first instance by discussing the circumstances anonymously. This will give you the opportunity to explore if there is a need to give more information.

If your colleague asks your opinion it is important that you encourage them to seek support from local specialist services. You can encourage them to speak with a variety of difficult specialist services, either externally from NHSBT or internally.

External sources could be:

- their GP;
- their local council welfare services
- The Police
- Specialist support groups/charities

Internal sources could be:

- Their Manager
- HR Direct or their local HR Consultant
- The safeguarding team
- The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- <https://nhsbloodandtransplant.sharepoint.com/sites/ourwellbeinghub>

External sources provided by NHSBT:

- The Employee Assistance Programme
- Occupational Health

### **3.5 I am worried that a colleague may be a victim of domestic abuse – what should I do?**

There may be some signs that a colleague may be suffering from possible domestic abuse and this can show itself in different ways. Possible signs may include:

- reduced quality and quantity of work or missing deadlines
- frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
- increased unexplained extra hours spent in the workplace
- changes in the way your colleague communicates - a large number of personal calls or texts or a strong reaction to personal calls
- frequent visits or contacts in the workplace from a potential perpetrator
- physical signs and symptoms such as unexplained or frequent bruises or other injuries
- a change in style or clothing (for example clothing to cover up signs)
- Tiredness, tearfulness or displays of anxiety and depression
- Purposeful isolating from team members, for example not wishing to go to social situations, avoiding lunch breaks with colleagues, turning camera off when on online meetings.

If you are a colleague and have some concerns about a team member please contact your Manager or HR Direct to discuss your concerns with them.

### **3.6 Do I need to raise a safeguarding concern?**

If you or a staff member are in immediate danger it is important that you act accordingly.

As an organisation we have a responsibility to ensure that individuals are safe from harm. Where you are concerned about the welfare of an individual or you believe there is a serious risk of harm, you should share information with an appropriate person. We have designated Safeguarding Leads within the organisation who can support you in making the decision to report a situation as a [safeguarding](#) concern.

In most situations there may not be an immediate danger but if you or a colleague were in an emergency situation we would recommend you call 999.

## 4. What happens to Alleged Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse who work in NHSBT?

4.1 If an employee is accused of domestic abuse or recognises and informs NHSBT about their possible abusive behaviour, we will provide information about the services and support available to them and will encourage them to seek support and help from an appropriate source. Any report will be considered in line with NHSBT's Just Culture Guidance. NHSBT 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.

In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in their current role(s). In these circumstances the possibility of alternative duties may be considered. Suspension may also be a consideration in certain situations, but this would only be considered if all other options have been exhausted and under the terms of the [Code of Conduct](#) and/or the [Disciplinary Policy](#).

If an anonymous allegation is received, it is important to ask who they are or how they know this information. Initial enquiries should be carried out to address whether the intent is genuine or malicious.

If you receive notice of an allegation, you should request as much information as possible in order to corroborate their story and let them know they should trust NHSBT to handle it in a way that will allow them to share information. Take notes and escalate if there is genuine concern or, give advice on contacting the police or signposting to relevant agencies for support.

4.2 If a team member admits to being a perpetrator or being accused as being a perpetrator, listen, stay non-judgemental, recognise their honesty in raising this with you and trust they wish to address their behaviour.

You may wish to encourage the team member to outline the situation they are in, explain the level of involvement of external agencies e.g. police, support agencies, and to discuss how and what impact it could have on their work. You may wish to complete the Individual Support Plan with them and discuss any safety planning that may need to be put in place.

You may also wish to support your team member by signposting them to other support available. You may need to raise an HR Direct query or speak to your local HR Consultant for advice and guidance.

- In these circumstances the employee will be:
- treated fairly and honestly in line with NHSBT's [Just Culture](#) Guidance
- helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- given access to support available to them such as EAP and other related support including counselling.

## 5. I am a Manager and I have been informed that my team member may be a perpetrator of domestic abuse – what should I do?

It is important that your team member is given the opportunity to discuss their situation with you. Give them a confidential and private setting in which to discuss their circumstances with you and follow the [Just Culture Guidance](#) in considering what next steps to take and what support you may need to offer them.

If a disclosure exposes an immediate threat to the safety or welfare of others, especially if children are involved, NHSBT would be required to take emergency action by informing the appropriate authorities and instigate measures.

## 6. What would happen if the victim an alleged perpetrator both work for NHSBT?

In cases where both the victim/survivor and the alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, we will ensure support is offered to both parties and that appropriate action is taken. This could involve completing the Individual Support Plan to put some guidelines and agreements in place. (Please refer to Link to Individual Support Plan on People First)

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

## 7. What additional resources can I get in supporting a team member

This policy and associated documents provide guidance and support to employees to ensure that they are able to:

- identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse
- create an environment where an employee feels safe to talk about things they may be experiencing
- allow an employee to realise that they have options
- respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner
- provide initial support and be clear about available workplace support
- understand when there is a need to escalate a concern for the safety of the individual and possibly others
- understand how NHSBT can contribute to safety planning
- understand that they are not counsellors.
- understand that they cannot act as an intermediary
- understand that they cannot fully assess the risk
- know how to signpost to other organisations and sources of support.

If you require any further training, resources or support please contact the safeguarding team at [safeguarding.concern@nhsbt](mailto:safeguarding.concern@nhsbt)." Or [ELearning For Health](#) [click for link]

Additional support for managers/colleagues supporting a team member includes access to welfare support from the safeguarding team, access to Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and additional HR support.

## 8. Policy Approval and Review

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## FAQ's Section Details

Section	Section Heading	Page
1	General Definitions	1
2	Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse	1
3	Supporting victims of domestic abuse as a manager or colleague	3

4	What happens to Alleged Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse who work in NHSBT?	5
5	I am a Manager and I have been informed that my team member may be a an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse – what should I do?	5
6	What would happen if the victim and alleged perpetrator both work for NHSBT?	5
7	What additional resources/help can I get in supporting a team member”.	6
8	Policy Approval and Review	6