



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

# Service Delivery / People and Development

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## Domestic Abuse Policy

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Executive Director of Service Delivery / Executive Director of People and Development</b>
<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Named Safeguarding Lead / Head of Human Resources</b>
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What we must  
do well



How we support our  
communities



We value and support  
the people we employ



We efficiently manage  
the Service

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy covers all employees of Humberside Fire Authority (HFA) and any person who carries out duties or services on behalf of HFA whether paid or voluntary. The safety of vulnerable people must be given the highest priority. Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) recognises that the protection and safety of vulnerable people is everyone's responsibility.

HFRS recognises that its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse, for example, as a survivor of domestic abuse, an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse, someone who has been impacted by domestic abuse or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. HFRS has a 'zero tolerance' position on domestic abuse and is committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support and assistance. This policy also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

HFRS recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue and undertakes not to discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse in terms of current employment or future development.

This policy is part of HFRS' commitment to creating a safer workplace and will send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. HFRS is a White Ribbon accredited organisation, an element of which works towards changing the cultures that lead to abuse and violence and promotes gender equality, as well as supporting the overarching Serious Violence Duty strategy to tackle violence and abuse against women and girls.

As a public body providing services to the people of Humberside, we have a statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended by the Police Reform Act 2002) to contribute to reducing crime and improving the quality of life of the people of Humberside.

HFRS acknowledges that domestic abuse occurs across all levels of society. Men, women, and children can all be victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse occurs amongst people of all gender identities, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration status, religions or beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds. Anyone can be impacted by domestic abuse but some, particularly women, are disproportionately more likely to be victims.

### **Core Code of Ethics**

HFRS has adopted the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is committed to the ethical principles of the Code and strives to apply them in all it does, therefore, those principles are reflected in this policy.

## National Guidance

Any National Guidance which has been adopted by HFRS will be reflected in this Policy.

## 2. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the [Equality Act 2010](#), and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services or in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees, and service users.

## 3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This document is the Service policy and provides agreed protocols together with information for the safeguarding of vulnerable people. The aim of this policy is to demonstrate HFRS' commitment with regard to domestic abuse. Through the application of this policy and the associated supporting guidance HFRS aims to:

- Ensure that all staff who ask for help in addressing domestic abuse issues are able to access appropriate advice and support in a considered and measured way.
- Ensure that all managers can access guidance on how to support and assist staff asking for help in relation to domestic abuse and are aware of how to support and advise employees and workers who may be perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- Provide confidence to staff seeking assistance that their situation will be handled sympathetically and confidentially.
- Reduce absence from work resulting from domestic abuse and have a positive impact on employees' mental and physical health and wellbeing. This includes staff who are supporting family members living with domestic abuse.

## 4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- [Equality Impact Analysis](#)
- Legal References
  - [Domestic Abuse Act \(2021\)](#)
  - [Serious Crime Act \(2015\)](#)
  - [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act \(2004\)](#)
  - [Health Safety and Welfare at Work Act \(1974\)](#)
  - [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations \(1992\)](#)
  - [Serious Violence Duty \(2022\)](#)
  - [The Care Act 2014](#)

- [Professional Standards Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Professional Standards Whistleblowing Policy
- [Professional Standards Complaints Policy](#)
- National Guidance  
There is no specific National Guidance relevant to this policy.

## 5. WHY IS DOMESTIC ABUSE A WORKPLACE ISSUE?

As an employer, fire and rescue services (FRS') must recognise that under the Health Safety and Welfare at Work Act 1974, they have a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees. FRS' need to recognise that domestic abuse is a workplace issue and undertake to raise awareness and provide support for both survivors and perpetrators.

FRS' must be clear that domestic abuse should be treated with the same degree of seriousness as any other form of harassment, violence or abuse and will not be tolerated. It would be wrong, and possibly dangerous, to raise awareness of domestic violence and raise expectations that help is available but not respond appropriately.

Identification of domestic abuse at an early stage can lead to appropriate help being offered, which eliminates factors that adversely affect productivity and result in:

- Employee absenteeism and turnover.
- Lost productivity.
- Stress.
- Workplace violence which threatens the safety of other employees.
- Impact on other staff.
- Financial costs.

Recognising and addressing domestic abuse at an early stage can prevent disciplinary action whilst at the same time benefiting the workplace environment and home/community environment.

## 6. WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse is the actual or threatened physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse of a person by a partner, family member or someone with whom there is, or has been, a close relationship. This abuse also relates to the perpetrator allowing or causing a child to witness, or be at risk of witnessing, domestic abuse. Domestic abuse essentially involves the misuse of power and exercise of control by one person over another.

Please note that so-called 'honour-based' abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) when the victim and perpetrator are personally connected may also fall under the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act. These forms of

abuse are most likely to be carried out by a member or members of the victim's family.

To be 'personally connected' means individuals who are married, civil couples engaged to be married or have agreed to enter into a civil partnership, who have been in an intimate personal relationship with one another or those who have a child or children to whom they each have parental responsibility or are relatives.

The Serious Crime Act (2015) created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships. The new offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour in an ongoing relationship between intimate partners or family members.

**Controlling behaviour:** 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 by regulating their everyday behaviour.

**Coercive behaviour:** 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, including gaslighting and bullying.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises a child as a victim of domestic abuse if they see or hear, or otherwise experience the effects of, the abuse, and are related to either the victim or perpetrator.

## 7. RECOGNISING THAT AN EMPLOYEE MAY NEED HELP

If a member of staff is being abused by someone they live with or have had a relationship with, there are things he/she can do. There are individuals and organisations that can give staff practical and emotional support, both inside and outside of the workplace. Staff members could talk to his/her line manager, HR representative or his/her trade union representative for advice and guidance.

It is not always easy to recognise that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse and may require some assistance. Certain indicators such as a sudden change in behaviour, depression, inability to concentrate, obvious injuries or regular but unexpected absence from work may be indicative of a variety of problems, of which domestic abuse may be one.

Warning signs may include:

- Uncharacteristic lateness and/or needing to leave early.
- Unusual number of calls from home and strong reactions to calls.
- Frequent absenteeism.
- May be extremely passive or aggressive.
- Seem chronically depressed or depressed in cycles.
- May isolate themselves at work.

- Inappropriate or excessive clothing.
- Repeated or unexplained injuries.
- Depression or anxiety.
- Difficulty in concentrating.
- Changes in quality of performance.

These are just a few characteristics; different people will react in different ways. A more important sign is when an individual behaves in a way that is unusual for him or her.

Those who suffer domestic abuse at home are often targeted at work. They may receive unwanted telephone calls or text messages or be assaulted on their way into or out of work. However, it is unlikely, in the first instance, that an employee experiencing domestic abuse will inform other members of staff of their situation. It is far more likely that the line manager will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as sickness absence management or poor performance.

As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered, and allow that employee to deal with their situation far more effectively.

## **8. DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE**

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a trade union representative, a line manager, or a colleague. Line managers and trade union representatives will not counsel victims but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

HFRS will respond sympathetically, confidentially, and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse. A welfare officer, trained in domestic abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff (if the employee agrees). This person will also provide guidance for line managers and trade union representatives when approached by staff who are being abused.

## **9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY**

Employees who disclose that they are experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults, or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees.

In circumstances where confidentiality is not able to be maintained, specialist advice will be sought before any further disclosures are made and the Service will review the matter with the employee concerned. The Service will look to seek the employee's agreement where possible.

When an individual experiences domestic abuse and we are providing support, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with our [Data Protection Policy](#).

Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. Whilst no local records will be kept of absences relating to domestic abuse, a central record will be kept. There will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse.

Improper disclosure of information i.e., breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **10. SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS**

HFRS recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and HFRS will provide support for employees who disclose abuse.

Your line manager is a key point of contact for reporting concerns and seeking support. They are here to listen, provide guidance, and ensure that your concerns are addressed appropriately. If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable discussing your concerns with your line manager, we have established [multiple channels](#) for reporting concerns anonymously or confidentially.

HFRS and Trade Union/Professional organisation representatives will work together cooperatively to help staff experiencing domestic abuse.

HFRS will respond sympathetically, confidentially, and effectively to any member of staff who disclose that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping with sympathetic consideration, referring to relevant policies including provision for reasonable adjustments.

Line 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, in line with the relevant policies.



- Temporary 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.
- Access to counselling/support services in paid time.
- Access to courses developed to support survivors of domestic abuse.

Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decisions on the course of action at every stage.

Other existing provisions (including Occupational Health and Wellbeing, independent counselling service and others) will also be signposted to staff as a means of support.

## **11. TRAINING AND AWARENESS**

Training regarding domestic abuse is included within both Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults training packages, which form HFRS staff's mandatory training package. This policy is available to staff on the HFRS website.

HFRS is 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.
- Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning.
- Signpost to other organisations and sources of support.
- Understand that they are not counsellors.

## **12. SAFETY PLANNING**

HFRS will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, HFRS will encourage its employees to contact a specialist support agency (or suitably trained specialist member of staff) who can undertake a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

HFRS will work with the employee and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety at

work and at home as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues. This will be documented in a personal safety plan.

### **13. RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO EMPLOYEES WHO PERPETRATE DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Harassment and intimidation by an HFRS employee, whether of a partner or ex-partner who works for HFRS or not, will be viewed extremely seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the HFRS disciplinary processes.

Conduct outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) may also lead to disciplinary action being taken against an employee due to the impact it may have on the employee's suitability to carry out their role and/or because it undermines public confidence in HFRS.

If an HFRS employee has been arrested for Domestic Abuse they should report this to HR. The Designated Officer for the Local Authority (DOLA — formerly LADO) has a duty to inform HFRS of allegations made against employees and volunteers who work with children. Police may share information of allegations under the Common Law Police Disclosure, which ensures that where there is a public protection risk, information will be passed to the employer or regulatory body to allow them to act swiftly to mitigate any danger.

Factors that will be considered are:

- The nature of the conduct and the nature of the employee's work.
- The extent to which the employee's role involves contact with other employees or the general public.
- Whether the employee poses a risk to other members of staff or the public.

If any of the circumstances set out in the above paragraphs are brought to a manager's attention, advice should be sought in the first instance from the HR Function.

#### **Risks to children, or adults with care and support needs**

Where the behaviour of a member of HFRS staff indicates that they may pose a risk to children or an adult with care and support needs, HFRS will ensure that this will be managed in accordance with the relevant local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership or Safeguarding Adult Board procedures as appropriate. Further details of the processes to be followed in this circumstance are included in the Safeguarding Policy.

#### **If the victim and the perpetrator work in the same organisation**

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, HFRS 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 and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. The Service will follow actions it deems appropriate to safeguard the individual.

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. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programs or offices. This will only happen when there is clear evidence to suggest abuse.

HFRS encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

#### **14. 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. HFRS recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds. Employees should make a report if they suspect a colleague is a perpetrator of abuse by using the [whistleblowing procedure](#). If an employee approaches HFRS about their abusive behaviour, HFRS will provide information about the services and support available to them.

HFRS 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.

HFRS's Core Code of Ethics is intended to inform all staff, irrespective of grade, of the standards of conduct expected of them. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which staff members are expected to abide. Staff members 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.

HFRS views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the organisation's Core Code of Ethics.

In some circumstances, it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in his/her current role(s), due to a caution or conviction.

These procedures can be applicable in cases where an employee has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened his/her partner.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against his/her partner.
- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against him/her.

- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship, against a child for which they have parental responsibility for or against a family member.

HFRS is committed to ensuring that:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure.
- All employees will receive guidance and support.
- Confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know.
- Investigations will be thorough and independent.
- All cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays.
- All efforts will be made to resolve the matter within 4-6 weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

**NOTE:** This procedure is intended to be safety-focused and supportive rather than punitive.

The alleged perpetrator will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly.
- Helped to understand the concerns expressed and the processes involved.
- Kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process.
- Advised to contact their trade union or professional organisation.

**There are five 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.
- Referral to Local Authority regarding risk to public/vulnerable people.

Any employee who is responsible for giving advice, or who comes into contact with or supports those vulnerable people or children experiencing domestic abuse needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators.

If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones and email then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

## 15. WHISTLEBLOWING

The Service has a [Whistleblowing Policy](#) which staff should follow in these circumstances.

The Service is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. The Service's Whistleblowing Policy makes clear that staff can and should raise concerns about practice or unprofessional conduct, and that they can do so without fear of reprisals. If any member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, even if this is not confirmed by any subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against the staff member raising the concern.

### **Designated Officer of the Local Authority (DOLA)**

Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a Designated Officer for the Local Authority (DOLA — formerly LADO) who is responsible for coordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused them or could cause them harm. In order to manage allegations against any person, the DOLA must be informed. This includes allegations made about a member of HFRS staff or a volunteer who works with children.

**Following a referral**, the HFRS procedure for managing allegations or concerns against any member of staff or volunteer who works with children is initially processed via the Service's complaints procedure detailed in the [Professional Standards Complaints Policy](#).

This procedure should be applied when there is such an allegation or concern that a person who works with children, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against children or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she may pose a risk of harm to children (including children both inside and outside of the workplace).

### **Person in Position of Trust (PIPOT)**

The statutory Guidance to the Care Act 2014 requires Safeguarding Adult Boards to establish and agree a framework and process to respond to allegations against anyone who works (either paid or unpaid) with adults with care and support needs.

**If you require further guidance / information relating to this document,  
further guidance / information relating to this document.**