

Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Primary School

Domestic Abuse Policy



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Date of last update	Autumn 2018
Date agreed and ratified by governing body or management committee	08/03/2024
Date of next full review	Summer 2025

Policy Statement

This Policy is also a point of reference for all staff who are involved in reports of domestic abuse in a work capacity. Staff can refer to this Policy for guidance purposes.

Introduction

Schools and educational settings have a responsibility to respond to the safety and welfare of children they are working with and a duty to recognise that their employees may also be affected by domestic abuse.

Aims of this policy

- To send out a strong message that domestic abuse will not be tolerated and that Our Lady of the Wayside School will promote healthy and respectful relationships.
- To develop an effective and supportive response for all those affected by domestic abuse.
- To optimise the opportunity for disclosure of domestic abuse in a safe environment.
- To offer practical suggestions of further support available.

Definition of domestic abuse

The Home Office (2013) definition of domestic violence and abuse 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 / emotional abuse – intimidation and threats (e.g. about children or family pets), social isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, constant criticism, enforced trivial routines, marked over intrusiveness
- Physical violence – slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing, damage to property or items of sentimental value, attempted murder or murder;
- Physical restriction of freedom – controlling who the mother or child/ren see or where they go, what they wear or do, stalking, imprisonment, forced marriage;
- Sexual violence – any non-consensual sexual activity, including rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, refusing safer sex or human trafficking; and
- Financial abuse – stealing, depriving or taking control of money, running up debts, withholding benefits books or bank cards.

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. This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group."

Raising of domestic abuse with Parent / member of staff

The member of staff who has the best working relationship with the parent/carer or member of staff should be the one who asks the questions about their concerns. This should occur in a safe and suitable environment, where the abuser or another inappropriate person is not expected to interrupt or overhear and respect given to that persons privacy and dignity. These conversations should never happen in the presence of the abusive partner, any children involved

OR any family member unless the individual states that it is safe to do so while the family member is not with them.

Response following disclosure or concern

In circumstances where the victim is under 18 years and the perpetrator is 18 years or above, or if both victim and perpetrator are under 18 years this should also be treated as a child safeguarding concern. Please follows Our Lady of the Wayside's safeguarding procedures.

Professional Curiosity

Staff must demonstrate a non-discriminatory approach and explore the issues and formulate judgements that translate into effective actions in their dealings with children, adults and families.

It is vital that all staff understand the complexity of domestic abuse and are curious about what is happening in the child, adult and perpetrators life. Professional curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value.

Staff should never avoid asking the difficult questions, sharing concerns with our Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL] as a "fresh pair of eyes" looking at a case can really help to maintain good practice standards and develop a critical mind-set.

Support

We will inform the individual who has disclosed, or of whom we have concerns for, of the local support services in your area, so they can contact them either with you or either directly at their convenience.

We will support staff who may be affected by domestic abuse, for examples they will be offered additional leave for appointments with solicitors or doctors or support services. We will be flexible as possible to be able to accommodate staff's requests.

Recording of information

Information recorded on any individual either studying or working at Our Lady of the Wayside will be stored in a safe manner, so not to heighten the risk to that individual, i.e. the abusive partner/family member may see the note and increase the abuse.

Staff Safety and Well Being

Staff are potentially at risk whenever they work with a family where one or more family members are violent. Our Lady of the Wayside will ensure that employees have the appropriate training and skills for working with people experiencing Domestic Abuse. We are aware of the emotional impact of working with victims and/or perpetrators of domestic abuse. We will offer support to our staff to minimise the impact of this work on their well-being.

Training

All school / educational setting employees are advised to complete domestic abuse training at some level.

No Recourse to Public Funds and the impact this has on children

There may be occasions where victims, children of victims, or carers may have an uncertain immigration status, which could prevent them from accessing services. The victim may be hesitant to take action against the perpetrator for fear of losing the right to remain in the UK. In some cases, victims have received threats of deportation from their partner or extended family if they report domestic abuse and have had their passports taken from them. Similarly, children may have had their passports taken away from them and may fear that they and/or their parent could be deported if they disclose domestic abuse in the family. This introduces an additional level of complexity and vulnerability and employees should be aware of this and ask the specific question if they think it is a potential issue.

Staff are aware that these issues create a complex challenge within safeguarding and can create an environment in which Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking might prosper. All staff have the skills and training to intervene and make good professional decisions and escalate to the DSL for appropriate levels of decision making.