

## Domestic violence policy

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Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements to assist members of staff who experience domestic violence which affects them at work, and managers who have to deal with members of staff who are experiencing domestic violence.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Domestic violence is not a private matter. If it involves physical violence, the threat of such violence or, for example, unlawful harassment, it may amount to a criminal act. Therefore primary responsibility rests with the police, the courts, social services and those voluntary organisations that provide assistance to those who experience domestic violence.
- 2.2 However, it is also an issue for employers. Domestic violence may impact on attendance at work and on work performance.
- 2.3 Domestic violence is frequently described as the emotional, physical, sexual or psychological abuse of a person by another family member. Men as well as women experience domestic violence and domestic violence may also take place in same sex relationships. The term domestic violence may also be used to include a violent relationship between children and their parents and between siblings. More usually however, domestic violence involves an attempt by a partner or ex-partner to exercise control over the other party, by the use, or threatened use of violence. Half of the people experiencing domestic violence no longer live with the other person.
- 2.4 Although incidents of violence which stem from domestic circumstances rarely occur in the workplace, the repercussions of domestic violence in the home may well affect work. The LFB therefore wants to develop a clear and effective response. The aim of this guidance is to assist managers in minimising absence or reduced performance and to support staff at work who experience domestic violence.

## **3 Challenging domestic violence - workplace information and culture**

- 3.1 Apparent tolerance of domestic violence can be reduced by managers and members of staff challenging comments that appear to condone domestic violence, sometimes in the guise of ill-judged humour, during informal workplace discussions.
- 3.2 A workplace culture which challenges domestic violence in general is part of making the workplace safer for those individual members of staff who are actually experiencing domestic violence.
- 3.3 Appropriate materials, contact numbers and details of support agencies, are available from the Counselling and Trauma Services.

## **4 How domestic violence comes to notice**

- 4.1 Domestic violence is unlikely to be disclosed readily or given as a reason for absenteeism or poor performance. However, managers who are proactive in regard to the welfare of their staff will find that staff become more disposed to talk to them about it. It is also possible that domestic violence may be identified through the monitoring of absence and work performance.
- 4.2 Because of the hidden nature of domestic violence, and the difficulties of disclosure, other members of staff who are seen as sympathetic may be approached first. Managers need to recognise and respect this.

- 4.3 A member of staff who is experiencing domestic violence which is affecting them at work, may wish to speak first to Counselling and Trauma Services in confidence, before deciding if to let their manager know of their difficulties.

## **5 Appropriate responses at an early stage**

- 5.1 Identification of domestic violence at an early stage can lead to appropriate help being offered which may reduce poor performance or prolonged or repeated sick leave, and the resultant burden on colleagues.
- 5.2 Integration of the response to domestic violence with LFB's procedures for absence control and capability will help to avoid taking inappropriate action against staff. For example, in the management of absence control, domestic violence may be disclosed. Any action can be reviewed at that stage in the light of the new information, and appropriate support offered to enable the member of staff to minimise future absences.
- 5.3 Consideration can be given to discounting reasonable absence due to domestic violence for the purposes of the application of absence control procedures and in the case of Control staff, attendance allowance.

## **6 Responding sensitively**

- 6.1 Members of staff who report that they are experiencing domestic violence are entitled to a supportive response from their managers, in accordance with the guidance offered in this document.
- 6.2 It is important that managers respond sensitively to information about domestic violence. When gauging their response managers might like to consider the following:
- Ensuring privacy for any conversations about the issues – using an office or room where interruptions can be avoided.
  - Being non-judgemental and patient – a member of staff experiencing domestic violence may need time to decide what to do, and may try different short term and long term options during the process.
  - Understanding why someone might be reluctant to leave a violent partner or to report the violence to the police.
  - Offering the option of speaking to another manager who may be more appropriate, such as a manager of the same age, ethnicity, sex or sexuality as the member of staff experiencing domestic violence. Alternatively a member of staff experiencing domestic violence may feel more comfortable talking to a counsellor from the Counselling and Trauma Service.
  - Being proactive – offering information on legal services, refuges, counselling and local voluntary services, at an early stage, rather than waiting for problems at work or with attendance. Such information is available from web-sites or from the Counselling and Trauma Service.
  - Re-assuring the member of staff that domestic violence is a crime and that they do not have to go on putting up with it.

## **7 Practical measures**

- 7.1 Managers might consider how the member of staff may be supported in the following ways:
- Agreeing what to tell colleagues, including how they should respond if the other party telephones or calls at the workplace. Providing a photo and other information (e.g. car registration) can help colleagues to be alert and supportive.

- Offering, or allowing a work colleague to accompany the member of staff to the police to report the violence, or to a housing office, solicitors, or domestic violence support agency, if they choose any of these courses of action.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware that personal information should not be given to anyone phoning or visiting the workplace – colleagues may know the partner or ex-partner, and perceive them as unthreatening and forget about such procedures.
- Where the person experiencing domestic violence is a woman, any home contact should be made by a woman member of staff unless otherwise agreed.
- Also be mindful of the welfare of work colleagues. Fielding threatening or abusive phone calls can be distressful.

## **8 Confidentiality**

- 8.1 Confidentiality should be respected unless the member of staff agrees, there may be benefit from immediate colleagues and managers knowing something of the member of staff's situation (see paragraph 8.1 above).
- 8.2 Managers may wish to remind staff who are aware of the situation, not to gossip about it.

## **9 Preventing unauthorised access to information**

- 9.1 Many people and their children escape domestic violence, but continue to be pursued, often for years, throughout the country. In these circumstances the ex-partner may possibly seek access to an employer's personnel or payroll records. It is vital that new addresses and telephone numbers are never disclosed to third parties by LFB staff.
- 9.2 Staff should be reminded that those alleged to be committing domestic violence may well get friends or relatives to try and access records. This may include the family of the member of staff concerned.

## **10 Responding to domestic violence when both parties work for the Brigade**

- 10.1 There may be occasions when both parties to the domestic violence work for the Brigade. There may follow incidents which occur in the work place or during work time, such as threatening phone calls, or misuse of the email facility.
- 10.2 Such conduct may constitute a breach of discipline and disciplinary action should be considered. Managers are advised to confine their consideration to the harassing conduct in the work place and not attempt to address the relationship which has given rise to the misconduct. Informal action by way of a consensual resolution, such as mediation, should not be attempted. Depending on the seriousness of the harassing conduct, managers may wish to consider a pre-procedural award, such as an oral warning or written warning, or in more serious cases referral to a discipline panel.
- 10.3 In some cases there may already be an earlier police involvement. The decision as to whether harassing conduct, which has occurred in the work place, should also be reported to the police should be discussed with the member of staff who has experienced the harassing conduct. The decision should be left with them however.

## **11 Help and support**

- 11.1 For further information and confidential advice contact the Counselling and Trauma Services on 020 8555 1200 extension 39555. For advice out of office hours, contact Control Operational Resourcing and Event (CORE) team on 020 8555 1200 extension 88111.

## Document History

### Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	15/05/24	SDIA	L - 10/08/23	HSWIA	11/08/23	RA	NA
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### Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 6	SDIA and HSWIA updated.	17/08/2023
Throughout	Minor changes made.	24/04/2024
Page 6	Equality impact assessment date updated.	16/05/2024
Page 5, para 11.1	Reference to RMC changed to CORE team.	24/07/2025

### Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Domestic violence	

### Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification