



Cumbria Family Support

Domestic Abuse Policy

Cumbria Family Support,
The Office,
Mardale Road,
Penrith,
CA11 9EH

Tel: 01768 593102

www.cumbriafamilysupport.org.uk

Domestic Abuse Policy (including Coercion and Control¹)

(1) Context

Cumbria Family Support believes that everyone has the right to live safely and without the fear of violence and abuse. We recognise that domestic abuse is unacceptable and that it occurs throughout society, irrespective of class, culture, gender, income, race, religion or sexuality. Its effects are far-reaching and can impact on others, notably children. We recognise that every child has the right to grow and develop in an environment free of domestic abuse, whether directly as a victim or witness of abuse in its own home or in the community.

(2) Operational Procedures- Provision of Family Support and Contact Centres

Cumbria Family Support accepts that some families using its services will have experienced varying levels of domestic abuse and we will ensure that they will receive sensitive and appropriate services. We also accept that our services need to be organised and run in a way which allow these families, other service users and volunteers / paid staff to be safe. In order to meet these requirements, we will ensure that:

For Contact Centres:

- Parents will be invited to visit the centre separately in advance of contact commencing,
- Parents will be given clear instructions in writing about which entrances to use and what times to arrive.
- Where appropriate resident parents being asked to explore the possibility of someone other than themselves or their new partner bringing the child(ren) to the centre.
- The contact waiting room doors being kept closed and precautions taken to ensure parents do not visit the refreshment area or toilets at the same time.
- Asking one parent to wait at the end of contact until the other has left the centre and the area immediately around it.

For all families:

- Ensuring that addresses, telephone numbers and other sensitive information always remain strictly confidential.
- Our referral forms will ask if domestic violence/abuse is a feature of the case, currently and/or historically.
- No family will be accepted until a referral form has been completed in full and received by the relevant staff member.
- Any information concerning domestic abuse will be treated seriously.
- Use of the Cumbria Family Support services will be denied to individuals or families where the practitioner feels their presence is likely to present a threat to the well-being of other service users and volunteers / paid staff.
- For contact centres we will use the NACCC Supervised –v- Supported Checklist in helping us make decisions about which cases are acceptable in a supported centre.
- Once a family has been accepted the practitioner will consider their safety needs and develop a plan by which they can be met.
- Any distress to children or adults brought about by bullying or pressure to disclose information will be dealt with promptly and firmly.

¹ See Appendix One for fuller details

- If an individual or family's behaviour is threatening, causes distress or is disruptive they will be asked to leave sessions of support/contact centre sessions.
- If an individual or family refuses to leave the Police will be called.
- All assessments in relation to domestic abuse, including any decisions in respect of protective actions will be undertaken in line with Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnerships Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedures, as detailed [here](#).
- Where there are concerns about the history of a new adult partner in a supported family, they will be encouraged to use the DVDS (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) as detailed in the above CSCP policy, [section 5](#)

(3) Learning and Development Expectations

- All paid staff must have regular training in this area and cover the topic in their induction. The specific requirements are detailed in CFS's Training Policy.

Summary of essential requirements for volunteers and paid staff which provide support to respond to domestic abuse in relation to families we support:

1. Unless agreed by exception, and in consultation with the Chief Officer or Team Leader, there will be a minimum of three volunteers/paid staff on duty at all times in our contact centres; this number will increase depending upon the number of families using the centre and rooms to be covered.
2. Volunteers/paid staff will be made aware of the particular needs of each family attending the centres or receiving family support services.
3. All volunteers/paid staff will receive training in the areas of domestic abuse and safeguarding.
4. Volunteers/paid staff will have immediate access to a telephone either when attending contact centre sessions, or via their own work mobile.
5. There are agreed procedures to follow in the event of an incident or an emergency. These procedures must be followed if you are working in the contact centres, offices, in a family's home or lone working. All volunteers/paid staff will be made aware of this procedure which are contained in the Contact Centre Procedures and the Lone Working Policy.
6. Cumbria Family Support will offer support to volunteers/paid staff who have become involved in stressful or violent incidents.

(4) Cumbria Family Support Statement in Respect of Domestic Abuse and Paid Staff or Volunteers

Cumbria Family Support recognises that some of its paid staff or volunteers (hereafter referred to as "employees") will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse. It may be as a survivor, someone who is currently living with domestic abuse; someone who has been impacted by domestic abuse or someone who perpetrates domestic abuse. It is our policy that every employee who is experiencing / has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that this will be treated sympathetically, sensitively, and, where possible, confidentially, and also in line with CFS' Confidentiality Policy.

Cumbria Family Support 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 support and assistance. We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is no room for violence or abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. This policy statement also covers the approach we will take where an employee is a perpetrator of domestic abuse. By developing an effective domestic abuse policy statement and working to reduce the risks related to

domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

Domestic abuse has clear implications for the workforce, affecting attendance and presenteeism, staff turnover and mental wellbeing. It could also affect workplace teams, who may be caught up in a colleague's distress or in supporting them to move on. We recognise that domestic abuse has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. However, domestic abuse does affect men as well as women and it should also not be assumed that only a husband / male partner is a threat because abusers may include wives, relatives, and same sex partners. We undertake to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development.

This policy statement will apply to all employees. This policy is part of Cumbria Family Support's commitment to the welfare and safety of all staff. This policy statement applies to all permanent, fixed term and volunteers.

This policy statement is intended to be safety focussed and supportive of victims of domestic abuse.

We believe that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator. We will treat every victim as an individual as everyone's circumstances are different. Once a victim raises a concern about domestic abuse, they will be offered appropriate support and information on protection and help. A survivor's experiences of domestic abuse may be compounded by racist reactions, isolation, language and cultural barriers or other reactions to age, sexuality, or disability. The same access to information and support should be available for everyone experiencing domestic abuse. Assumptions about what action is appropriate will not be based on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

If an individual makes a disclosure that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they must be assured that the information they provide is confidential. Consent will be sought if information is to be shared and all relevant governance will be observed. There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when:

- There are concerns regarding children (for instance, if an employee gives information which suggests that their child or another child is at risk of abuse -whether physical, emotional, sexual or through neglect).
- If there is concern around vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of other employees, or
- If it is believed an employee and/or colleague(s) are at risk of serious injury or death.

In these circumstances, the individual should be informed of the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained. Where there are concerns regarding children, the manager/supervisor needs to be satisfied that appropriate steps are being taken to protect children and if they are not satisfied, they must speak to the Chief Officer (or Chair of Trustee if this relates to the CO). Consideration will be given to making a referral to Children's Services. If there is concern for a vulnerable adult's safety, the manager/supervisor should inform the individual that they are seeking further advice and discuss this with the Chief Officer (or if this relates to the Chief Officer, the Chair of Trustees) and may include raising a Safeguarding Adult Concern (SAC).

Managers have a duty to maintain a safe secure working environment for all employees and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks as part of safety planning. The

manager should advise the individual concerned fully what information they will be sharing with colleagues and confirm the basis for it. Managers/supervisors should remind employees that this information is confidential and any unauthorised breaches of this or improper disclosure of information could result in disciplinary action being taken. The consequences of breaching confidentiality could also have very serious consequences for the person experiencing domestic abuse. It is important that the employee is made aware of the above at the beginning of any discussions.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a variety of sources. This could include:

- Line manager
- Colleague
- Trustee

It is not their role to counsel victims, but they can offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

We will respond sympathetically, supportively, and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse. Managers should consult with the employee and consider what actions that they can make to support victims of domestic abuse this could include, but is not limited to:

- Temporary adaptations to the victim's working patterns
- Using other existing Policies (e.g. Flexible Working)
- Signpost and support Safety Planning²
- Signposting to counselling/support services (see [Domestic Abuse- How to get help](#))

We will work with the employee and specialist services to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety and, if applicable, the safety of their children as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, taking into account the duty of care for all employees.

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the same organisation CFS will take appropriate action. Action should be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. 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 perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices.

We encourage all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing 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 this statement.

² Safety planning Research suggests 75% of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work; from threatening calls to harassment and arriving unannounced. We have a duty of care to all our employees and we will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse. When an employee discloses domestic abuse, we will encourage employees to contact a specialist support agency or a member of staff who can undertake a DASH (Domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence risk assessment – www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

The Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) received royal assent on 3rd March 2015. The Act created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships (section 76). 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. The offence carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

This offence is constituted by behaviour on the part of the perpetrator which takes place "repeatedly or continuously". The victim and alleged perpetrator must be "personally connected" at the time the behaviour takes place. The behaviour must have had a "serious effect" on the victim, meaning that it has caused the victim to fear violence will be used against them on "at least two occasions", or it has had a "substantial adverse effect on the victims' day to day activities". The alleged perpetrator must have known that their behaviour would have a serious effect on the victim, or the behaviour must have been such that he or she "ought to have known" it would have that effect.

The types of behaviour associated with coercion or control may or may not constitute a criminal offence in their own right. It is important to remember that the presence of controlling or coercive behaviour does not mean that no other offence has been committed or cannot be charged. However, the perpetrator may limit space for action and exhibit a story of ownership and entitlement over the victim. Such behaviours might include:

- a. isolating a person from their friends and family;
- b. depriving them of their basic needs;
- c. monitoring their time;
- d. monitoring a person via online communication tools or using spyware;
- e. taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep;
- f. depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services;
- g. repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless;
- h. enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim;
- i. forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities;
- j. financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance;
- k. threats to hurt or kill;
- l. threats to a child;
- m. threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to 'out' someone).
- n. assault;
- o. criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods);
- p. rape;
- q. preventing a person from having access to transport or from working.

This is not an exhaustive list.