

Domestic Abuse Policy

Introduction

This policy aims to equip managers, supervisors, personal tutors and other members of staff and the student community to support members of King's Community who might be experiencing domestic abuse. Information included in this policy may also be useful for those experiencing domestic abuse.

Aim of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support individuals experiencing domestic abuse;
- enable individuals experiencing domestic abuse to remain productive and at work;
- aid managers seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse;
- assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse; and
- reinforce our objectives as a socially responsible organisation by demonstrating that we value, and are prepared to support, staff during difficult periods.

What is Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is abusive behaviour by one person to another, where they are both aged 16 or over and they are personally connected. The abusive behaviour can be a single incident or a course of conduct.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse; or
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Definitions

Domestic Violence and/or Abuse: can be any incident or pattern of incidents of violence, abuse or controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial

- emotional
- verbal

It is not uncommon for someone experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse to experience multiple forms of abuse.

Controlling behaviour: 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: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, frighten, isolate or create dependence.

The role of the line manager

Line managers have a crucial role to play in enabling individuals experiencing domestic abuse to seek help. We will provide training for all managers in handling sensitive issues (including domestic abuse), raising awareness of domestic abuse in teams, and operating the procedures for handling instances of domestic abuse.

The role of your line manager is to:

- identify individuals experiencing difficulties as a result of domestic abuse (for example, using regular performance appraisal, or by fostering an open management culture that enables team members to disclose sensitive issues);
- provide support in the first instance, including specific advice on the options available, but also recognise the limitations of their role (referring to professional counsellors or experts where necessary. [This may include HR](#));
- protect confidentiality in all instances (excepting the requirements of child protection);
- direct individuals to the appropriate internal or external source of help and support, for example [King's Employee Assistance Programme](#) or external agency;
- take action to protect the [safety of all individuals in the team](#); and
- enable the affected individual to remain productive and at work during a difficult period in their domestic life, for example by using the organisation's [leave policies and procedures](#).

Whilst line managers will be able to provide a line of support there will be limitations and they may refer individuals to external experts where necessary.

Attendance

We recognise that those experiencing domestic abuse may need to be absent from work at times and will assist them by utilising our leave and [flexible working policies](#).

Individual absences can be discussed and agreed between the individual and the manager, with HR support where appropriate.

Line managers will make every effort to ensure that leave requests related to domestic violence are not declined for planned absences. Additionally, the impact of absences due to domestic abuse will be taken into account during any sickness absence management process.

Security and Safety

We will work to protect the [safety and security of all staff and students](#), including those affected by domestic abuse and their colleagues.

We encourage individuals to disclose that they are at risk from domestic abuse with our security team who can work with them to provide additional support, if required, on campus.

Data Protection

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.

Recognising Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone; regardless of personal characteristics and experiences, including but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education level, grade and income.

Those working closely with staff and students such as work colleagues/managers (staff) or fellow students/lecturers/supervisors/personal tutors (students) can play a crucial role in supporting individuals experiencing domestic abuse and enabling them to seek specialist help. Everyone's experience of domestic abuse will be different as will be their reactions to experiencing the abuse; they may be afraid, angry or have no outward reaction at all. A disclosure could also come in many forms; it could be something said jokingly, a story that someone starts to tell then stops and says it doesn't matter, or it could be a question.

Whilst everyone's experience is different, there are common factors that link the experience of an abusive relationship. In recognising domestic abuse look out for:

- Any visible injuries or changes to attire and clothes, e.g. wearing clothes which do not suit the climate to hide bruises or wearing excessive make-up.
- Broken objects or damage to the home or other property such as phones, computers, tablets.
- Difficulty contacting the individual including abrupt or regular disconnections during phone calls, being regularly interrupted or it becomes increasingly difficult to organise a time to meet.
- Changes in behaviour, acting in a way that is unusual or out of character for them including missing deadlines, a decrease in outputs, quality or grades.
- Withdrawing from previous sources of support e.g. team chat threads, catch-ups, course/module noticeboards, networks.
- Reluctance to talk about their home situation or avoiding answering questions about it.
- Frequent sickness absences or lateness with unlikely explanations.

It is important to recognise that none of these things specifically indicate that a staff member or student is experiencing domestic abuse. However, it is important we are aware of and sensitive to these signs which can suggest that a person is struggling with something. Some of these behaviours could reflect a range of issues.

It is also important to consider whether any assumptions or unconscious bias you might hold about an individual's identity or background may influence your belief about whether an individual may or may not be experiencing domestic abuse. It is therefore important to sensitively explore and establish what is behind the behaviours and identify appropriate support.

Further questions to help identify and explore different domestic abuse behaviours are set out below.

It is possible that changes in behaviour and/or performance may potentially lead to disciplinary/capability procedures (staff) or misconduct procedures (students) against the individual experiencing the domestic abuse prior to or after a disclosure. It is important that the focus is on supporting the individual. If changes in behaviour and/or performance have led to disciplinary or misconduct procedures, you should work with the individual and the Senior HR Business Partner or Student Conduct and Appeals.

Recognising Domestic Abuse in a hybrid workplace

Signs of domestic abuse, which may have been previously spotted by work colleagues/managers (staff) or fellow students/lecturers/supervisors/personal tutors (students), will no longer be as easily observed as staff work and students study from home for longer periods.

Some things to consider:

- Changes in behaviour, acting in a way that is unusual or out of character for them.
- Having sufficient time during video calls to check in with people, looking out for any changes in behaviour or mood.
- Change in use of cameras on Teams call may mean individuals are hiding bruises or damage to property
- Withdrawing from previous sources of support e.g. team/study group chat threads or catch-ups.
- Wariness or anxiety about their partner or a family member coming into the room whilst on a call or you
- are speaking to them.
- Increased reluctance to talk about their home situation or avoiding answering questions about it.
- Signs of tension, audible conflict in the home, shouting at children or others.
- Difficulty making contact with the individual virtually.

Signalling Domestic Abuse

With the increase in video conferencing, some individuals experiencing domestic abuse may also use subtle gestures or signals on camera to indicate they are experiencing abuse and/or distress and signalling the need for support without leaving a digital print.

For example, this gesture originated in the USA and was widely advertised and shared over the internet and throughout the UK. [Hand signal where the individual faces their palm to camera, tucks their thumb and then traps the thumb.](#)

Supporting discussions on Domestic Abuse

It is important to recognise that individuals might disclose their experience of domestic abuse in work or study environments and how someone responds to a disclosure, regardless of their relationship with the individual, is really important.

Please refer to the [Domestic Abuse Support Assessment Form](#) for more information when an individual discloses an incident of domestic abuse.

Further information on signposting to external specialist organisations and internal support available at King's is set out below.

Listen

Take the time to listen to someone. Over time, small comments may proceed bigger explanations and disclosures once a mutual trust and respect has been developed. Create an environment where it feels safe to talk.

To expand your understanding and knowledge about effective listening, you might be interested in viewing [King's Organisational Development 'Connect' Trainings](#) or viewing 'listening' courses on [LinkedIn Learning](#) (free and accessible as a member of King's).

Responding

Be aware and mindful of your reactions and responses to an individual who has disclosed they are experiencing domestic abuse. Thank the person for the disclosure. It is important to remind anyone who chooses to disclose their experience that no one, regardless of relationship or status, has the right to hurt them and it is not their fault that they have been treated this way.

It is important to respond in a way that is non-judgmental, emphasises their choice and maximises their control over what happens next.

To expand your understanding and knowledge about responding, you might be interested in viewing ‘responding’ courses on [LinkedIn Learning](#) (free and accessible as a member of King’s).

Give Options

Allow space to talk through some possible options and next steps. Remember, it is important that *they* decide what they want to do. Avoid giving advice, assuming you know what is best, or expecting the individual to do what you would or have done in similar situations.

If you are not aware of all the different options that might be available to individuals, have a look at the signposting support set out below, including links to external domestic abuse organisations.

Regular contact

Regularly checking in with the individual can provide a link and sense of normalcy that can be important to individuals. The contact should be thoughtful and not be considered overwhelming, burdensome or stressful to the individual.

For line managers, it is important to ensure sufficient structured contact with team members, including any who are subject to sickness leave or furlough. Contact with an employer may be an opportunity for someone who is still living with their abuser to have a ‘legitimate’ link to the outside world.

Confidentiality

Given the nature of domestic abuse, it is important to maintain the trust of the individual. This will mean ensuring confidentiality of any disclosures except in relation to child protection and safeguarding. King’s has a duty to safeguard any child or adult at risk, who either applies and is admitted as a student to King’s College London or comes into contact with King’s College London as a result of university activities (which includes staff). In these instances, you may not be able to maintain confidentiality and should refer to [King’s Safeguarding policies for further details](#). If you are still unsure, you might want to contact your Senior HR Business Partner.

There may also be occasions such as where it is necessary to agree with the individual experiencing domestic abuse what (if anything) work colleagues/managers (staff) or fellow students/lecturers/supervisors/personal tutors (students) should be told. This is important where there is a risk of incidents in the workplace, study or classroom environment.

Reporting

When discussing an experience of domestic abuse with an individual, it might be appropriate to discuss options available for reporting an incidence. Not everyone will want to report an incidence of domestic abuse, and that is ok.

Immediate danger: you, or the individual experiencing domestic abuse should call 999 (or 112 from a mobile). If you or the individual are unable to speak or speaking would put you or them in danger, the [Silent Solution](#)

can be used by calling 999 and pressing '55' when prompted. If you/them are unable to use a voice phone, you/them can register with police text services.

Not an emergency: you or the individual experiencing domestic abuse can report the incident to Crime Stoppers anonymously by calling crime stoppers at any point on 0800 555 111 or [using their online form](#). You/them can also call the Police non-emergency number 101 or attend any local Police station. Rights of Women have [detailed advice about reporting to the police and a guide to criminal investigations](#).

Reporting at King's: King's has introduced [Report + Support](#). Report + Support provides a consistent and simple way for students, staff and visitors to formally report incidents of inappropriate behaviour including abuse, whether it is happening to them or they are seeing it happen to someone else. Reports can be made anonymously or named and there is also a wide range of [support articles](#) providing information and signposting to support services.

It is also important to remember:

- There are a lot of reasons why someone may choose not to report domestic abuse.
- They might not want to report to the police or the university.
- They might be concerned that people won't believe them or may not identify what has occurred as domestic violence and/or abuse.
- They may be concerned who else might be informed.
- They may have a fear of or confusion about the criminal justice system if the incidence is reported to the police or Crime Stoppers.
- They may have a fear of or confusion what happens if the incidence is reported to the university.
- They may be worried about repercussions or perceived repercussions (outside and/or within King's).

[Additional support identifying Domestic Abuse](#)

Below is a series of questions based on research and specialist organisations working in this area, which can be used to help identify whether an individual might be experiencing domestic abuse. This list is illustrative and is not exhaustive.

Emotional abuse - does the person ever:

- Belittle, or put down the individual?
- Blame others?
- Deny that abuse is happening, or play it down?
- Isolate the individual from family and friends?
- Stop the individual going to university or work?
- Make unreasonable demands for the individual's attention?
- Accuse the individual of flirting or having affairs?
- Tell the individual what to wear, who to see, where to go, and what to think?
- Control the individual's money, or not give them enough to buy food or other essential things?

Financial/Economic abuse - does the person ever:

- Control how money is spent?
- Give the individual an "allowance"?
- Deny the individual direct access to bank accounts, loans or grants?
- Forbid the individual from working?
- Run up large debts on joint accounts without the individual's permission or take actions that lead to the individual having bad credit?
- Force the individual to be involved in fraudulent activity?

- Spend money on themselves but not allow the individual to do the same?
- Give the individual presents or pay for things and expect something in return?

Physical abuse - does the person ever:

- Slap, hit or punch the individual?
- Push or shove the individual?
- Bite or kick the individual?
- Burn the individual?
- Choke or hold the individual down?
- Throw things?

Psychological abuse - does the person ever:

- Call the individual names?
- Yell or swear at the individual?
- Ignore or isolate the individual?
- Exclude the individual from meaningful events or activities?
- Threaten to hurt or kill the individual?
- Destroy things that belong to the individual?
- Stand over the individual, invade their personal space?
- Threaten to kill themselves or the children?
- Read the individual's emails, texts or letters?

Sexual abuse (Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of their gender) - does the person ever:

- Make unwanted sexual demands?
- Hurt the individual during sex?
- Pressure the individual to have unsafe sex – for example, not using a condom?
- Pressure the individual to have sex (including with other people)?
- If someone has sex with the individual when they don't want to, this is rape, even if they are in a relationship

Signposting to internal information and resources

We are committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all staff and students. As part of this commitment, we recognise the importance of raising awareness about domestic abuse and ensuring that those affected have access to the necessary information, support, and resources.

Whether you are directly impacted, supporting a colleague, or seeking to educate yourself on this important topic, we have curated internal resources and signposting information to guide you. These tools are designed to help individuals understand, navigate, and access the appropriate support channels confidentially and effectively.

Our goal is to empower members of our community with knowledge and support, creating a space where everyone feels safe and respected. This won't be an exhaustive list however will be updated during subsequent policy reviews.

Access to King's Accommodation

Staff:

Requests for emergency accommodation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Staff members (e.g. line managers) should contact kingsresidences@kcl.ac.uk where the request will be triaged and allocated to the

most appropriate person in the team.

Students:

Where possible, students who qualify may be offered up to two weeks' emergency accommodation and access to an emergency housing support pack if needed (containing bedding, basic toiletries and a food voucher). Requests should usually be raised via the Student of Concern team, who would assess the student's needs for emergency accommodation and the suitability of King's residences. If a request comes from a member of staff outside of the Student of Concern team, they should submit the [Emergency Housing Request form](#). If a request for housing is raised outside of standard University opening times (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm), King's Residences may not be able to offer accommodation until the appropriate staff are available to process the request. In these instances, please see the article [guidance on homelessness advice when university services are closed here](#).

Staff:

- [Domestic Abuse toolkit](#) includes information and resources
- [Flexible Working](#) including further information and the King's policy
- [Finding the HR support you need](#) to discuss any concerns in more detail
- [King's Employee Assistance Programme](#), which offers free, independent, confidential and expert advice for staff on a range of matters, including domestic violence. Includes telephone-based counselling.
- [Staff mental health guidance](#), you can book a 1:1 consultation and the team will be able to provide guidance on looking after your own mental health, as well as signpost to appropriate services.
- [Leave, holidays and time away](#) and [sickness absence](#). Employees should check their [Terms & Conditions of employment](#) for sick pay provisions
- [Managing your personal records at King's](#) to update address and contact information
- [Payroll including how to change your bank details](#)
- [Terms and conditions of employment](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy | King's College London \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Health, Safety & Welfare Policy](#) and
- [Information Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Support Assessment Form](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Toolkit](#)

Students:

- [Guidance for students on Bullying and Harassment](#)
- [Guidelines for student Misconduct Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Student Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#)

KCLSU also have a campaign '[KNOW: an end to Domestic Violence](#)' to make King's a more supportive place for student survivors of domestic violence and to play an active role in preventing and protecting members of the Kings student community from experiencing domestic violence. They have produced:

[Domestic Violence Support Contacts](#): A list of contact and support information regarding domestic violence within and outside of King's compiled by the KNOW Campaign.

[Domestic Violence Information Guide](#): A thorough guide with information regarding what domestic violence is, how it can happen, and support and contacts available

Signposting to external specialist organisations

There are a huge number of resources and support available to individuals experiencing domestic abuse from specialist organisations and trained professionals. It is important to remember that accessing support information will likely be more difficult when working or studying entirely from home, or if a person has no access to alternative computers (such as work or library computers).

When signposting to support, it is important to remind the individual that many specialist organisations' websites containing support and information will have 'quick exit' buttons and encourage them to use the 'incognito' functions on the web-browser if they are frightened their partner or family member might see their search history.

The government have [dedicated webpages related to domestic abuse](#).

Organisations that provide specialist support to those experiencing domestic abuse include:

- [Women's Aid](#) is a grassroots federation working together to provide life-saving services in England, they operate a [live-chat service](#) and an [online Survivors' Forum](#) – e:helpline@womensaid.org.uk ph:0808 2000 247.
- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) is open 24 hours a day, and provides support and guidance for potential victims of domestic abuse, and for those who have concerns about friends or a loved one – ph:0808 2000 247
- [Refuge](#) provide specialist services which include refuges, independent advocacy, community outreach projects and culturally specific services, they have a [contact form](#) that can be used to schedule a call at a time that's most convenient for you.
- [Men's Advice Line](#) is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse or anyone worried about a loved one who may be a victim of domestic violence - e:info@mensadvice.org.uk or ph:0808 8010 327.
- [Galop](#) is the National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse specialist helpline that can be accessed by members of the LGBT+ community or anyone worried about a loved one who might be victim of domestic violence – e:help@galop.org.uk or ph:0800 999 5428.
- [Respect](#) provides confidential and non-judgemental advice for those concerned about their behaviour towards their family and loved ones - e: info@respectphoneline.org.uk or ph:0808 802 4040.
- [Southall Black Sisters](#) offer specialist support, advocacy and information to Asian and Afro-Caribbean women suffering abuse.
- [Stay Safe East](#) provides specialist and holistic advocacy and support services to disabled victims and survivors of abuse.

- [**NSPCC**](#) is available for advice and support for anyone with concerns about a child.
- Further support services from [**the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Violence**](#).
- [**Respect**](#), which provides practical information and advice on domestic abuse for perpetrators, the abused, health and social care professionals, and family and friends;
- [**the National Domestic Abuse Helpline**](#), which provides advice for those experiencing domestic abuse;
- Business in the Community's [**domestic abuse toolkit**](#) which helps ensures all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse; and
- [**Government advice and guidance**](#) for those who are experiencing, or feel at risk of, domestic abuse.