# Domestic Abuse Guidance

At a time when we are having to stay at home, where we should feel safe, we know that some people are not safe and are more vulnerable to domestic abuse. According to research, one in four women and one in six men in the UK will be the victims of domestic abuse during their lifetime. During the lockdown domestic abuse calls to the Met Police have risen by approximately a third in London.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone. Southwark Council is here to support our employees.   
The Council has a sub-group that are developing a workforce Domestic Abuse policy. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we have the support and agreement from our sub-group and our Trade Union branch secretaries to publish our Domestic Abuse guidance in the interim and make it available to support our employees whilst the policy is finalised.  
  
This guidance is part of our commitment to support our employees’ health and wellbeing at work. It covers the internal and external support available to employees experiencing domestic abuse.

## Definition

The term "domestic abuse" rather than "domestic violence" is being used to ensure clarity that it is not only physically violent behaviour that constitutes abuse. It means that one person is abusing their power and control over another. The term domestic abuse reflects that a number of abusive and controlling behaviours are involved beyond violence. Some other agencies still use the term domestic violence, but the agenda remains the same. Slapping, punching, kicking, bruising, rape, ridicule, constant criticism, threats, manipulation, sleep deprivation, social isolation, denying access to money and other controlling behaviours all count as abuse.   
  
The Home Office Definition 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  
• physical  
• sexual  
• financial  
• emotional”  
  
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.

## Support for individuals

### Internal Support

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone. The Council will consider practical workplace support for people experiencing domestic abuse and provide access to counselling.   
  
You will find [sources of internal support here](http://thesource/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADEAMgAyADgAfAB8AFQAcgB1AGUAfAB8ADAAfAA1).  
  
We would encourage you to discuss your situation with your line manager or a trusted colleague, if you feel you can. You can also request via email a member of the HR team to call you to discuss domestic abuse and support you can get by emailing [HR@Southwark.gov.uk](mailto:HR@Southwark.gov.uk) titled Request for advice on domestic abuse. A member of the HR team will call you back within the working day. If your email is sent during the evening or overnight they will get back to you the next working day. You can also make a call to the HR team to seek advice and guidance over the telephone by calling 020 7525 7213.

### External Support

There are many organisations providing [external support](http://thesource/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADEAMgAyADkAfAB8AFQAcgB1AGUAfAB8ADAAfAA1) for you at to get help and advice concerning domestic abuse.   
Please see the type of support available to you [here](http://thesource/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADEAMgAyADkAfAB8AFQAcgB1AGUAfAB8ADAAfAA1).

### Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

If you are worried about your behaviour towards your partner, or if you have been abusive or violent, you can get information from the Respect phone line.  
Call 0808 802 4040 (free from landlines and most mobile phones).  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. You can leave a message when the lines are closed or busy and they will get back to you within two working days.  
Email: [info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk) or [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk/)

## Guidance for Managers on how to support employees experiencing Domestic Abuse

### Discussion Prompts

As a line manager, you have a crucial role in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help.   
  
The Council's confidential Employee Assistance Programme provides management support to any manager requiring advice and assistance in handling sensitive issues including domestic abuse. (Call the dedicated Managers Support Helpline on 0800 1116 385 (9am to 6pm Monday to Friday).   
  
HR can also provide advice and guidance to you as a manager by emailing [HR@Southwark.gov.uk](mailto:HR@Southwark.gov.uk) titled Request for advice on domestic abuse. A member of the HR team will call you back within the working day. If your email is sent during the evening or overnight they will get back to you the next working day. You can also make a call to the HR team to seek advice and guidance over the telephone by calling 020 7525 7213.  
  
If you notice some of the signs of domestic abuse in an employee, you may want to approach/contact them and ask if you could speak to them in private and sensitively express that you have concerns about them as a line manager (or colleague).   
  
These [discussion prompts](http://thesource/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADEAMgAzADAAfAB8AFQAcgB1AGUAfAB8ADAAfAA1) will assist you in having such a discussion.

### Domestic Abuse Discussion Checklist

The [Domestic Abuse Discussion Checklist](http://thesource/assets/legacy/getasset?id=fAAxADEAMgAzADEAfAB8AFQAcgB1AGUAfAB8ADAAfAA1) for practical workplace support for people experiencing domestic abuse can facilitate this and should be used. Managers must also recognise the limitations of their role as they are not professional counsellors or experts.