



## Scope

Applies to all staff/volunteer, trustees and volunteers. Reduction of harm from DVA relies on multi-agency approaches. Acacia staff/volunteer/volunteers and volunteers need to be aware of their responsibilities. For information regarding staff experiencing DVA please see page 12.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires staff/volunteer to be alert to the strong links between adult DVA, substance misuse and child abuse, and recognise when a child is in need of help, services or at potential risk of suffering significant harm.

Children may suffer both directly and indirectly in households where there is DVA. They experience emotional abuse when hearing or seeing the ill-treatment of another, and they are at increased risk of being harmed in other ways, including physical abuse.

Remember that staff/volunteer and service users may be victims of, or perpetrators of DVA

## What to do if you suspect DVA

Some Service Users will find it difficult to disclose DVA for a variety of reasons. Information should be given to service users where DVA is known or believed to have occurred.

**Where a case is identified the staff member must follow Acacia's process for all safeguarding recording and responses including documentation and flagging on iizuka. Please refer to PQ002-our core safeguarding policy or PQ002a What to Do and follow the pathway.**

## Reference Documents

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018-2013

Equality Act 2010

PQ 002 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

PQ 002 What to Do

## Domestic Violence and Abuse Lead

The Domestic Violence and Abuse Lead for Acacia is Tor Rondeau. Advice and reporting of incidents should be forwarded to Tor. If she is absent, one of the safeguarding deputies should be contacted.

## Purpose



This policy aims to support staff/volunteer and volunteers to recognise risk factors for domestic violence (DVA) and describes steps required to ensure appropriate support and onward referral where necessary. It covers aspects of effective practice in responding to disclosures of DVA for front line staff/volunteer/volunteers, and gives more detail on the management of risk related to mental capacity, adult safeguarding and DVA.

The protection provided by this policy applies equally to both our clients and to our own staff/volunteer and volunteers. For this reason the policy is divided into two sections; outward facing and inward facing.

It is divided into two sections, Outward Facing and Inward Facing. These sections refer to DA management of clients and DA management of colleagues.

## **Introduction and Glossary**

Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) is a largely a hidden crime, occurring mainly in homes behind closed doors. As such, it can be difficult to record the context in which abuse is being perpetrated, or accurately measure the impact of the abuse on those who experience it.

Living with DVA raises significant public health and child protection issues. 'Violence and abuse can lead to an increased risk of poor mental health, injuries, chronic physical conditions, unwanted and complicated pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and substance misuse, and the effects can last a lifetime and into subsequent generations' (DOH 2010).

This policy promotes the use of Acacia safeguarding procedures to help keep adults, young people, children and families safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation. It should be read in conjunction with PQ002 Safeguarding policy, which provides additional guidance in relation to reporting lines, supervision and support for staff/volunteer and volunteers.

Acacia adopts the Home Office definition of DVA, which is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members. It is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021). The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

## **Types of DVA:**

### **Coercive control**

The Serious Crime Act 2015 creates a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships (section 76) and closes a gap in the law around patterns or controlling or coercive behaviour in ongoing relationship between intimate partners or family members. If found guilty can carry a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a fine or both.

### **Controlling behaviour**

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.

### **Violent resistance**

Sometimes DVA can lead to "violent resistance" - a response to being controlled or feeling frightened where violence is used as an act of "self-defence".

### **Situational couple violence**

Situational couple violence, also called common couple violence, is not connected to general control behaviour, but arises in a single argument where one or both partners physically lash out at the other. This is the most common form of intimate partner violence, particularly in the western world and among young couples, and involves members of both sexes nearly equally.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. More detailed information can be found in the Acacia safeguarding policy.

### **Forced marriage**

Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. FM is a specific offence under s121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

### **Elder/carer abuse**

Young people aged under 18 years who are violent towards their parents

### **Physical Abuse**

Hitting, shaking, smacking, punching, pushing, kicking, biting, starving, tying up, stabbing, suffocation, throwing things, using objects as weapons, female genital mutilation, so called 'honour violence'. The physical effects are often on areas of the body that are covered and hidden (i.e. breasts and abdomen).

### **Emotional/ Psychological abuse**

Intimidation, insulting, isolating the victim from friends and family, criticising, denying the abuse, treating them as inferior, threatening to harm children or take them away. Swearing, undermining confidence, making discriminatory remarks, making the victim feel unattractive, calling them stupid or useless, humiliating and eroding their independence. In the LGBT community, sometimes the threat of 'outing' (threatening to divulge the nature of someone's sexuality to family friends or employers) is used to intimidate individuals.

### **Sexual abuse sexual assault**

Rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, pressuring an individual to participate in non-consensual sexual activities, sexual insults, stopping a woman from breast feeding, coerced nudity, taking of explicit photographs under duress, sexual violence, non-consensual acts during intercourse



including strangulation, beating, restraint and marking. The perpetrator may refuse to use protection and knowingly expose the victim to infection.

### Financial and material abuse

Not letting a victim work, undermining efforts to find work or study, refusing to give money, asking for an explanation of how every penny is spent, and making them beg for money, gambling. Not paying bills and intentional mismanagement of funds, theft fraud, and financial exploitation. The victim may have no access to cash or cards and have their accounts or access to money tightly controlled.

**Although a large proportion of DVA is perpetrated by men towards women it is acknowledged that men can also be victims of DVA.**

### Policy – Outward Facing

#### Key Principles of Acacia DVA Policy

- To ensure the safety of those abused and that of dependent children.
- To enable the staff/volunteer/volunteer to supply those abused with the appropriate information concerning other agencies providing support services. external (see Appendix 1 for relevant support agencies contact details).
- To create a supportive environment where the abused can talk about their experience in a safe and confidential environment, supported by prompts during the conversation including enquiries to establish whether the person feels free/safe to talk and answer questions.
- To ensure that staff/volunteers have the ability to receive disclosures of abuse and respond to such disclosures in a supportive, reassuring and appropriate manner.
- To establish appropriate pathways and support for staff/volunteers subjected to DVA. (Please see page 11 for details).

Any actions undertaken by staff and volunteers in respect of DVA will only be undertaken with the consent of the client unless there is a significant risk to the client and/or a child's health and well-being, or the capacity of the individual is such that he/she is unable to consent.

Acacia staff may need to escalate concerns based on their professional judgement following discussion with another Acacia DSL and further advice should always be sought if necessary. Thirtyone:eight should also be consulted for additional advice where needed. Professional judgement should be used but the welfare of the child and the adult should be paramount.

### Pregnancy and increased risk

Violence to women starts or increases both in severity and frequency during pregnancy. Often involving punches or kicks directed at the women's abdomen. Once born, the impact on the mother



and child attachment process may be affected, as well as the child's capacity to develop normal responses to stressful situations. This can result in a fractious baby and place both mother and child at further risk from their abuser. DVA may also be a major contributive factor to the child and parent's mental health.

DVA during pregnancy puts a pregnant woman and her unborn child in danger. It increases the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, low birth weight, foetal injury and foetal death.

If a woman is pregnant and / or child lives in a household where DVA is believed to be a factor, and where there is a need of support and/or protection a referral MUST be made to the relevant Children's Social Care Local Authority (LA).

## Signs of DVA

All frontline staff and volunteers play a key role in supporting service users and their families who may be experiencing DVA and therefore, should be aware of the signs that could indicate DVA is occurring and know what to do if a client discloses DV. Staff/volunteers may also become aware of DVA without a full disclosure being made due to identifying the indicators of DVA.

Some of the signs of DVA, such as physical marks, may be easy to identify. Others may be things you can easily explain away or overlook. Domestic abuse affects each person differently, but it impacts everyone both physically and psychologically. It's often an aggregate of related signs of domestic abuse that tip someone off that a person is at risk.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of their social, educational, or financial status. While red flags aren't always proof that someone is being mistreated in this way, they are worth knowing. Many who are abused may try to cover up what is happening to them for a variety of reasons, and it goes without saying that these individuals could benefit from help.

### Physical Signs of Abuse

If someone is being physically abused, they will likely have frequent bruises or physical injuries consistent with being punched, choked, or knocked down—and they'll likely have a weak or inconsistent explanation for these injuries. Some signs of physical abuse include:

- Black eyes
- Busted lips
- Red or purple marks on the neck
- Sprained wrists
- Bruises on the arms

It's also common for someone to try to cover up the physical signs with clothing. For example, you may notice that someone is wearing long sleeves or scarves in the hot summer. Wearing heavier than normal makeup or donning sunglasses inside are also common signs of domestic abuse.

### Emotional Signs of Abuse



Domestic abuse takes a serious emotional toll, creating a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, or despair. Domestic abuse can cause people to believe that they will never escape the control of the abuser. They may also exhibit a constant state of alertness to the point they never can completely relax.

Other emotional signs of abuse include:

- Low self-esteem
- Extremely apologetic or meek
- Seeming fearful
- Changes in sleep habits (sleeping too much or not enough)
- Agitation, anxiety, or constant apprehension
- Developing a drug or alcohol problem
- Symptoms of depression
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Talking about or attempting suicide

These symptoms, of course, are key symptoms of PND and anxiety, but it is really important to keep in mind that they are typical of domestic abuse victims who feel they are trapped in an abusive relationship.

### **Behavioural Changes**

If you observe that someone who was once outgoing and cheerful has gradually become quiet and withdrawn, it could be a sign of domestic abuse.

You may notice that the person:

- Is reserved and distant
- Drops out of activities they would usually enjoy
- Cancels appointments or meetings with you at the last minute
- Is often late to work or other appointments
- Exhibits excessive privacy concerning their personal life or the person with whom they're in a relationship
- Begins isolating themselves by cutting off contacts with friends and family members

### **Exhibitions of Fear**

People who are being abused may seem anxious or nervous when they are away from the abuser, or they may seem overly anxious to please their partner. If they have children, the children may seem timid, frightened, or extremely well-behaved when the partner is around.

Although victims may not talk about the actual abuse, they might refer to the abuser as "moody" or having a bad temper. They may reveal that the partner is particularly bad-tempered when drinking alcohol.



Sometimes, the fear a victim of abuse experiences is so intense they feel paralyzed to make decisions or to even protect themselves or their children. When the fear gets to that point, they will even turn down help offered to them by friends, family, or even professional protective services.

### What Control Looks Like

DVA is not about violence, it's all about control. If you notice that someone seems to be controlled or extremely manipulated in all areas of their life, it could be a sign they are being abused at some level. Here are some examples of control:

- Asking permission to go anywhere or to meet and socialize with other people
- Referring to their partner as "jealous" or "possessive," or always accusing them of having affairs
- Their partner constantly calls or texts them wanting to know where they are, what they are doing, and who they are with. The partner may even follow the victim to check up on them.
- Having very little money available to them, not having access to a credit card, or having to account for every penny spent
- Not having access to a vehicle

Helping someone who is the victim of domestic abuse is a delicate matter. By learning some of the warning signs, you can feel more comfortable with seizing the opportunity to help a victim of domestic abuse or violence.

### Risk Factors:

Some of the main risk factors associated with DVA are summarised below. A useful acronym to remember some key high risk factors is: SPECSS

- Separation/Child Contact: Leaving a violent partner is extremely risky
- Pregnancy (pre-birth and under 1s): a high percentage of DVA starts in pregnancy
- Escalation of violence: Previous DVA is the most effective indicator that further DVA will occur
- Cultural factors:
  - Language barriers
  - Immigration status
  - Isolation
  - Within communities where the practices of FGM; forced marriage and 'honour based' violence are more likely to occur.
- Stalking: Research finds that intimate relationship stalkers use more dangerous stalking behaviours than non-intimate relationship stalkers
- Sexual Assault: Where abusers use both physical and sexual violence victims are at an elevated risk



- Minimising or normalising (by both victim and perpetrators)
- Multiple perpetrators

The term 'Toxic Trio' has been used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance misuse, which have been identified as common features of families where harm to children has occurred. They are viewed as indicators of increased risk of harm to children and young people. Work in this area has shown that there is large overlap between these parental risk factors and cases of child death, serious injury and generally poorer outcomes for children across all ages.

### **Asking about abuse**

Staff and volunteers shouldn't shy away from asking appropriate questions to ascertain whether the client is experiencing or has experienced DVA. Asking the question gives the person the opportunity to disclose historical abuse which may be contributing to their mental health problems. Equally it gives an important opportunity to disclose experiences of abuse in the present.

Discussions about DVA should take place with the person in question on their own, and not in the presence of any potential perpetrator who may coerce or intimidate the victim in to denying that abuse is taking place.

Ensure it is safe to ask:

- Consider the environment
- Is it conducive to ask?
- Is it safe to ask?
- Never ask in the presence of another family member, friend, or child over the age of 2 years
- Create the opportunity to ask the question
- Use an appropriate professional interpreter (never a family member).

### **Ask:**

Frame the topic first then ask a direct question. Examples:

“As violence in the home is so common we now ask contacts about it routinely”

“Are you in a relationship with someone who hurts or threatens you?”

“Did someone cause these injuries to you?”

### **Validate:**

Validate what's happening to the individual and send an important message

“You are not alone”

“You are not to blame for what is happening to you”

“You do not deserve to be treated in this way.”

### **Assess:**

Assess contact's safety:

“Is your partner here with you?”



“Where are the children?”

“Do you have any immediate concerns?”

“Do you have a place of safety?”

**Action:**

Prioritise people’s safety. Be aware of the DVA agencies in your local area, if safe to do so, provide advice and support in a leaflet format, consider a referral to a refuge or police if immediate support is needed.

**Document:**

Consider safety and confidentiality when recording information in client notes. Medical records can be used by survivors in future criminal justice proceedings.

If a client discloses current DVA or if you strongly suspect it you must discuss this you’re your safeguarding lead and follow the normal safeguarding internal process for Acacia. Unless you feel that the client and/or the child are in danger you must discuss the matter with the client and only break confidentiality with their permission. When children feature or an adult at risk is involved the staff/volunteer/volunteer must follow the relevant Acacia safeguarding policies and procedures.

People have complex lives and being safe is only one of the things they want for themselves. Staff/volunteers should work with the Adult to establish what being safe means to them and how that can be best achieved.

## Perpetrators of DVA

Some clients accessing Acacia services themselves can also be perpetrators of DVA and this can often be hidden or go unrecognised by family members or professionals. Even where the abuse appears to be linked to a person’s condition or state i.e mental illness - it does not mean that it should be tolerated by the victim or ignored/colluded with by professionals. The abuse may have been of many years standing and the abuser’s vulnerability may have been used as an excuse for their behaviour when they could actually control their actions. If there is a current risk to the perpetrators family this risk must be assessed and responded to in accordance with this policy and Acacia’s safeguarding policy and procedures. The perpetrator should be encouraged to access appropriate support/intervention.

Whilst it may be appropriate for perpetrators to receive a service from Acacia to address their mental health needs, our staff/volunteers lack specialist training and should never attempt any interventions specifically to address their abusive behaviour.

## Information Sharing

Acacia fosters a ‘one team’ approach that places the welfare of individuals above organisational boundaries and recognises that partners who work better together will be more effective in supporting those at risk of abuse and neglect. GDPR permits information to be shared in a situation of ‘vital interest’. For example; prevent serious harm or where a person’s life is



threatened. Staff/volunteer MUST comply with local and national information-sharing and multi-agency partnership arrangements

## Consent

In all cases staff/volunteer should attempt to obtain the consent of the person before calling the police. This is not always appropriate and the requirement to obtain consent may be overridden or dispensed with, depending on the following points:

The seriousness of the incident

Potential risk to other people

The capacity of the person to make the decision, this must be recorded in the clinical notes

Where a person refuses to allow contact with the police, an assessment as to what would be in the best interests of the person and/or other adults at risk or children must be made and recorded. This should involve consideration of referral to Victim Support Services – people who have been abused need to be aware that this service accepts self-referrals.

The case must be notified at the earliest opportunity to the safeguarding lead for advice and support.

### Overriding Consent

Consent can be overridden in cases where:

- Where there is a serious and imminent threat to the client and/or others (ring 999)
- The allegation is against a paid carer
- Where there are concerns for other adults and/ or children at risk
- Where there is a clear public interest and it is alleged that a serious crime has been committed.

Referrals to the police should be made in writing to ensure there is a clear audit trail of information shared and advice given.

## Training and Preparedness

The Operations Director and the Volunteer Co-ordinator are responsible with support from the DA Lead for ensuring that staff/volunteers have access to relevant information, training, support and supervision in relation to this policy, and that appropriate records are kept of all training.

Staff/volunteer/volunteers at all levels have responsibility for remaining informed and up to date with all aspects of child and adult safeguarding including this policy.

DVA training will be provided to all front-line staff and volunteers. It is a minimum requirement that refresher training is completed at least at two yearly intervals. Acacia provides access to both participatory training and eLearning to suit the learner.



## **Policy – Inward Facing**

### **Introduction**

Acacia is committed to heightening awareness of domestic abuse and providing guidance and support for employee/volunteers and management.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's campaign, 'Domestic abuse is your business – break the silence' sets out why action is needed in the workplace.

[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/da\\_employers\\_pack.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/da_employers_pack.pdf)

### **Policy statement**

Acacia is committed to promoting zero tolerance of domestic abuse against and by its entire staff/volunteer workforce and will ensure that the working environment promotes the view that any form of domestic abuse is unacceptable and that such abuse will not be condoned or made the subject of humour in any form.



Acacia recognises that every employee/volunteer who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise and discuss the issue with their line manager and/or Safeguarding Lead, in the knowledge that the matter will be dealt with sensitive, non-judgemental, confidential and effective manner.

We acknowledge that domestic abuse:

- Is a crime, is disruptive and socially harmful
- May have an impact in the workplace and that Acacia has responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its staff and volunteers.
- Can affect an individual's performance
- Does not discriminate on the basis of sex, class, race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, marital status or sexual orientation and therefore the policy is applied to all university/college employee/volunteers.

## Aim

We aim to ensure that those employee/volunteers seeking assistance, whether survivor or alleged perpetrator, are confident that their situation will be dealt with seriously and sensitively. We will:

- Assist and support employees/volunteers experiencing domestic abuse
- Aid managers in seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse
- Assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse

## Employees/Volunteers Experiencing Domestic Abuse

Acacia respects the employee/volunteer's right to privacy in the event that they do not wish to inform Acacia that they have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic abuse.

Employees/volunteers who make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse will be treated in a supportive and sympathetic manner. They will not be judged by other employees/volunteers and will be encouraged to help themselves out of their abusive circumstances, having due regard for their personal safety, and that of any children or vulnerable adults in their household.

Employees/volunteers can seek advice and support services from their line manager. Alternatively, employee/volunteers can contact Acacia's external counselling and pastoral counselling services free of charge directly. The contact details are available widely within Acacia. Trade union representatives should also be able to provide advice and support.



Employees/volunteers should be encouraged to discuss any issues of domestic abuse with their line manager. The effects of domestic abuse can impact on an employee/volunteer's standard of work or attendance. This will be taken into consideration with regards to any formal policies or procedures, including performance management or disciplinary procedures.

## Managers' Responsibility

Managers should appreciate how difficult it may be for an employee/volunteer to discuss his/her personal circumstances and should always offer support in a sensitive and non-judgemental fashion. They should remember that signs of abuse will often not be visible and that an individual may leave their abusive environment only to return again some time in the future.

Where a manager suspects that an employee/volunteer is experiencing domestic abuse, they should:

- Contact the DV Lead before any discussion takes place with the employee/volunteer.
- Ensure that any discussion about the employee/volunteer's situation, or with the employee/volunteer, takes place in private.
- Handle the situation with care and sensitivity. Employees/volunteers should never feel pressurised into disclosing personal information that they do not feel comfortable sharing. Be aware that the employee/volunteer may need some time to decide what to do.
- Respect confidentiality - understand that the employee/volunteer may not wish to discuss any details with their line manager and may prefer to involve a third party, such as a trade union representative, colleague or someone from an outside agency.
- Find out what the employee/volunteer wants and whether a manager or another agency can help them achieve it; find out what support is available and explore these options with the employee/volunteer. Be honest and realistic about what can be offered.
- Be aware of any additional issues faced by the employee/volunteer due to their protected characteristics.
- Introduce and encourage employee/volunteers to contact the support services available, workplace and/or external (see Appendix 1 for relevant support agencies contact details), but avoid taking on a counselling role themselves.
- Be aware that in many cases there would also be the involvement of police

## Recognising that an employee/volunteer may need help

It is not always easy to recognise that an employee/volunteer is experiencing domestic violence and may require some assistance. Certain indicators such as a sudden change in behaviour,



depression, inability to concentrate, obvious injuries or regular but unexpected absence from work may be indicative of a variety of problems, of which domestic abuse may be one.

## Warning Signs

- Comes to work repeatedly with injuries.
- Unusual number of calls from home and strong reaction to the calls.
- Late for work and needing to leave early.
- Secretive about home life.
- Frequent absenteeism.
- Emotional reactions such as tearful, angry, depressed, nervous, confused.
- Partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life.
- Partner makes demands over their work schedule.
- May be extremely passive or aggressive.
- May seem chronically depressed or depressed in cycles.
- May isolate them at work.
- Uncharacteristic lateness.
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing.
- Repeated or unexplained injuries.
- Depression or anxiety.
- Difficulty in concentrating.
- Changes in quality of performance.

These are just a few characteristics. Different people will react in different ways. A more important sign is when an individual behaves in a way that is unusual for her or him.

Those who suffer domestic violence at home are often targeted at work; they may receive unwanted telephone calls or text messages or be assaulted on their way into or out of work. However, it is unlikely, in the first instance, that employee/volunteers experiencing domestic abuse will inform other members of staff/volunteer of their situation, or approach their manager with problems.

It is far more likely that the manager will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as sickness absence monitoring or poor performance.

As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee/volunteer is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered, and allow that employee/volunteer to deal with their situation far more effectively.

## Employee/volunteers who are alleged perpetrators or perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employee/volunteers will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as purely a private matter. Acacia recognises it has a role in encouraging and supporting employee/volunteers to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee/volunteer approaches their line manager or another manager about their abusive behaviour, Acacia will provide them with information about the services and support available to them and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

Acacia will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change in behaviour.



An employee/volunteer who is cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence in relation to domestic abuse may be subject to Acacia disciplinary procedure. Acacia also reserves the right to consider the use of the disciplinary procedure should an employee/volunteer's activities outside work have a detrimental impact on their ability to perform their role for which they were employed and/or be considered to have brought Acacia Family Support into disrepute.

If a colleague is found to be knowingly assisting an abuser in perpetrating abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones or email, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

If it becomes evident that an employee/volunteer has made a malicious allegation that another employee/volunteer is perpetrating abuse, then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken under Acacia disciplinary policy.

In cases where both the survivor and the alleged perpetrator or perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the same institution, Acacia will take appropriate action. If abuse takes place at work prompt disciplinary action will be taken.

## Confidentiality

Once an employee/volunteer has confided in their line manager or a member of the Human Resources department that they are experiencing domestic abuse, they should be reassured that this information will be kept confidential.

Correspondence between Acacia and the employee/volunteer should be discussed and agreed regarding safe contact numbers and addresses.

In the cases of DVA involving staff/volunteers, confidentiality can only be broken in the following circumstances:

- With the consent of the individual
- If it is required by law
- If it is unequivocally in the public interest where failure to disclose information may expose the individual or others to the risk of death or serious harm. In such circumstances information should be disclosed promptly to an appropriate person or authority
- If it will prevent a serious risk to public health and serious crime
- If a child is involved

## Ensuring employee/volunteers' Health and Safety



The main responsibilities of employers, staff/volunteer and others for the health, safety and welfare of persons at work are defined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Where an employee/volunteer advises that they are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse an attempt should be made to assess whether there is a threat to their personal safety during working hours. A risk assessment should be documented and any mitigating actions identified/implemented.

Such actions could include:

- Improving security measures such as changing security codes
- Determining who is on site by checking ID badges of staff/volunteer and learners
- Reminding staff/volunteers not to divulge information about the individual, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone number of work patterns
- Offering temporary or permanent changes in the workplace, work times and patterns, helping to make the employee/volunteer less at risk at work, and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the office layout to ensure the employee/volunteer is not visible from reception or from ground floor windows.
- Offering changes in specific duties or where possible redeployment to another post.
- Agreeing what to tell other staff/volunteers and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Consider providing colleagues with a photograph of the abuser and other relevant details such as car registration number, which may help to maintain security in the workplace.
- Making sure that any systems for recording staff/volunteer whereabouts during the day are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the Acacia premises, considering how risks can be minimised (for example changing duties or allowing a certain colleague to accompany them on certain journeys).
- Recording any incidents in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, emails or visits to a member of staff/volunteer by their partner/ex-partner; details of any witnesses should also be recorded. Acacia could also apply for an injunction if the actions of the alleged perpetrator impinge on the health and safety of other members of staff/volunteers.

## Leave options for employees experiencing domestic abuse

Acacia has a special leave policy which has provisions to allow for some paid or unpaid leave to deal with special leave requirements, at the manager's/Trustees' discretion. Managers should deal



sympathetically and consistently with requests from employees who have disclosed they are experiencing domestic abuse, for reasonable time off.

Employees' will be entitled to special leave to attend civil or criminal court hearings as a witness. They will also be entitled to special leave if they are required to attend court to seek an injunction against a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Managers must record applications for special leave in accordance with Acacia special leave policy. The applications should be kept securely to ensure confidentiality and must be approved by the board of Trustees.

Managers should be sympathetic and creative in exploring options with staff where it is necessary for them to arrange appointments during the normal working day. These appointments may include: arranging rehousing, appointments with support agencies (Social Services, Women's Aid, counsellors etc.), and meetings with solicitors, making alternative childcare or education arrangements.

## APPENDIX 1

Where to go for help – We do not routinely check this information to confirm whether it is still current. Please double check any contact details before giving to clients/staff as some of the services may no longer be available.

### GENERAL

**Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid**  
**0808 800 0028**  
[www.bswaid.org](http://www.bswaid.org)

**Birmingham Housing Options Hub:**  
**0808 169 9604**

**Birmingham Council Housing**  
**0121 303 7410 or 0121 303 2296/4806**  
<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk>

**Adult Social Care**  
**0121 303 1234 or 0121 675 4806**

**Children's Social Care**  
**0121 303 1888 or 0121 675 4806**

### BAME



Aanchal Women's Aid A women's organisation that assists women affected by physical as well as mental, financial, sexual and emotional domestic abuse. The helpline for Asian women experiencing domestic violence provides support to women whose languages include: Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Tamil and Urdu. T: 08454 512 547 helpline 24 hours E: info@aanchal.org.uk W: www.aanchal.org.uk

Bharosa Domestic Abuse Service. Bharosa provides culturally appropriate and sensitive support to women aged 16+ experiencing domestic abuse from a South Asian or Middle Eastern background. T: 0121 303 0368 W:

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1711/bharosa Domestic\\_abuse\\_service](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1711/bharosa Domestic_abuse_service)

Chinese Information and ADVAice Centre The Chinese Information and ADVAice Centre (CIAC) provide free information, aDVAice and support to disaDVAntaged Chinese people living in the UK. They support women and children who are survivors of, or at risk of domestic violence. T: 020 7 462 1281 – Domestic violence line E: info@ciac.co.uk W: [www.ciac.co.uk](http://www.ciac.co.uk)

Jewish Women's Aid Jewish Women's Aid is the only specialist organisation in the UK supporting Jewish Women affected by domestic violence. T: 0808 801 0500 (9.30am – 9.30pm Monday to Thursday) W: www.jwa.org.uk

Karma Nirvana Karma Nirvana is a UK registered Charity that supports victims and survivors of Forced Marriage and Honour-Based Abuse. T: 0800 599 9247 E: email form available on the contact page of the website W: [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

Turkish Cypriot Women's Project Offers help with emergency housing, children, injunctions against violent partners, welfare benefits, health care matters and other issues related to domestic violence. It provides a free service for any Turkish-speaking women living in London. T: 020 8 340 3300 E: info@tcwp.org.uk W: www.tcwp.org.uk

Shakti Women's Aid Based in Edinburgh, Shakti has been working since 1986 to offer support, advocacy and information to all black and minority ethnic women, children and young people experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse. T: 0131 475 2399 W: www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

**Not for profit organisations that works to protect girls and young women who are at risk from female genital mutilation (FGM)**

Daughters of Eve T: 07983 030 488 W: www.dofeve.org

Forward UK T: 020 8960 4000 (09:30 – 18:00 Monday to Friday) W: www.forwarduk.org.uk

End Violence Against Women Coalition A coalition representing seven million individuals and organisations across the UK who believes that they can and must create a world free from the threat and reality of violence against women. T: 020 7 033 1559 E: admin@evaw.org.uk W: www.enDVAgainstWomen.org.uk



## LGBTQ+

Broken Rainbow A helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic violence. T: 0300 999 5428 (Monday and Thursday 10am - 8pm); Tuesday and Wednesday 10am to 5pm (1pm – 5pm Tuesday is a Trans specific service) E: [help@brokenrainbow.org.uk](mailto:help@brokenrainbow.org.uk) W: [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk)

## Men

Men's ADVAice Line The Men's ADVAice Line is a confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members). T: 0808 801 0327 E: [info@mensaDVAiceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensaDVAiceline.org.uk) W: [www.mensaDVAiceline.org.uk](http://www.mensaDVAiceline.org.uk)

## Other

RSVP: If you have been subjected to sexual violence and abuse, you can access our free services. We support children and adults, and people of all genders. We also have some services for people supporting survivors. Please contact us to find out more about our services and to see how we can support you on: 0121 643 0301 or [info@rsvpor.org.co.uk](mailto:info@rsvpor.org.co.uk)

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) National charity safeguarding children T: 0800 028 3550 E: [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk) W: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Network for Surviving Stalking A national UK charity representing stalking victims and their families T: 0808 802 0330 (9:30-4pm weekdays (except Wednesday 1-4pm) E: [aDVAice@stalkinghelpline.org](mailto:aDVAice@stalkinghelpline.org) W: [www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)

Rape Crisis – England Rape Crisis is a national charity and the umbrella body for a network of independent member Rape Crisis organisations. T: 0808 802 9999 (12 - 2.30pm - 7 - 9.30pm) W: [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

Refuge Opened in 1971, Refuge became the world's first safe house for women and children escaping domestic violence. T: 0808 2000 247 W: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

Refuge Crisis Line (London wide) T: 0870 599 5443

Respect Respect has been supporting male survivors of domestic violence since 2007 when they took over the management of the Men's ADVAice Line. T: 0808 801 0327 E: [info@mensaDVAiceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensaDVAiceline.org.uk) W: [www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net) Southall Black Sisters A not for profit organisation set up in 1979 to meet the needs of black (Asian and African Caribbean) and minority ethnic women. T: 020 8 571 0800 W: [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)

Women's Aid - (run in partnership with Refuge) Women's Aid is the key national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. We support a network of over 300 dedicated



specialist domestic violence services across the UK. T: 0808 2000 247 E: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk) W: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

White Ribbon Campaign UK The White Ribbon Campaign was launched in Canada in 1989 following the unprovoked murder of 14 women at a university campus. It is recognised as the world's largest effort of men and boys working together to end men's violence against women and girls. T: 01422 886 545 E: [info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](mailto:info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk) W: [www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk)

Scotland Rape Crisis - Scotland T: 08088 01 03 02 (Every day 6pm – midnight) W: [www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk) Scottish Women's Aid Offering a 24/7 telephone service, Scottish Women's Aid is the lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. T: 0800 027 1234 W: [www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk)

Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation T: 0800 917 1414 W: [www.niawf.org](http://www.niawf.org)  
Rape Crisis – Ireland T: 1800 778888 (24 hour helpline)

Wales Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline is a confidential free support and information service for women, children and men in Wales who are experiencing or who have experienced domestic abuse and or sexual abuse and violence. T: 0808 8010 800 W: [www.wdah.org.uk](http://www.wdah.org.uk)

Welsh Women's Aid Welsh Women's Aid is the national umbrella organisation representing local Women's Aid Groups situated throughout Wales. Their member groups provide direct services for women and children who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. T: 0808 8010 800 W: [www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)

Black and Asian Women Stepping Out (BAWSO) Black and Asian Women Stepping Out is a specialist service provider, providing practical and emotional support to people affected by domestic abuse and other forms of violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, human trafficking and prostitution, primarily from BME communities. T: 0800 731 8147 (24/7 telephone service) W: [www.bawso.org.uk](http://www.bawso.org.uk)

