

Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance Notes

for Employers and Engagers
of Musicians

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Guidance notes

1. Introduction

As far as is reasonably practicable, employers and engagers must ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their workers. It is important that all new and existing workers are made aware of the Domestic Abuse Policy and the help and support that's available.

These Guidance Notes refer to the MU template Domestic Abuse Policy which is a useful starting point for people seeking to implement a Domestic Abuse Policy.

Employers and engagers should ensure that the policy is widely publicised to all workers and easily available. You are encouraged to review your other policies to ensure that they consider domestic abuse, including those on sickness and absence, performance, paid and/or unpaid leave, as well as your disciplinary procedures.

We encourage employers and engagers to draft their domestic abuse policy as broadly as possible and to apply to the entire workforce, including workers, freelancers and self-employed musicians.

Drafting a domestic abuse policy to apply to all these types of workers sends a clear message that you will support any musician who needs help, regardless of employment status.

Please adjust the policy as you see fit for your workplace and considering the resources you have available.

2. What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is defined within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the "Act").

Within the Act, domestic abuse is referred to as abusive behaviour which one person exhibits towards another. It must take place between two individuals aged 16 years or over who are connected to each other. This could, for example, include individuals who are (or previously have been) married or in a civil partnership or an intimate personal relationship, or who have a child together. This is regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It could also include individuals who are related to each other.

This behaviour can be a single incident, or a pattern of behaviour. Behaviour is considered abusive if it consists of any of the following:

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

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of their gender identity, sex, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, or background.

3. Examples of abusive behaviours

- **Controlling behaviour** can be 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 the victim.
- **Post-separation abuse** is domestic abuse that takes place after a relationship has ended. Controlling or coercive behaviour after a relationship ends and that took place after 5 April 2023 is a criminal offence – the perpetrator and worker no longer have to be in a relationship or living together when the behaviour occurred. Signs that an worker may be experiencing post-separation abuse can include their perpetrator showing up to the workplace or to staff social events unexpectedly.
- **Economic (including financial) abuse** means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on an individual's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property or obtain goods or services. In the workplace, for example, this could amount to controlling working hours or someone's ability to participate in work-related activities; making the victim late for work or controlling their travel to or from work; and/or isolating the victim from colleagues.
- **Technology-facilitated abuse** involves the use of technology to perpetrate domestic abuse and has become increasingly common. Mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets can be misused to stalk, harass, impersonate, and threaten victims. The growing use of internet-connected home devices (such as smart speakers) may also provide perpetrators with a wider and more sophisticated range of tools to track and harm their victims. Employers should remain vigilant about the different forms of technology that workers have access to within the workplace or when they are working from home, which could be targeted by a perpetrator and prevent the worker from carrying out their role effectively. In the workplace, some examples of technology-facilitated abuse include, hacking into, monitoring, or controlling email accounts, coercing the victim to share their passwords, limiting or controlling access to the internet or other equipment, or using GPS locators on items such as phones and computers.
- **Spiritual abuse**, which is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, which may be perpetrated (but not exclusively) in a religious context.

When responding to domestic abuse, it is important to understand that employers and engagers are not expected to become “experts” or solve the problem of domestic abuse, but to provide support to the musicians they work with. The three key steps are:

- **Recognising** and acknowledging the problem in a supportive, non-judgmental way.
- **Responding** appropriately to musicians who share that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- **Referring** the musician to appropriate help and specialist support.

4. Recognising and acknowledging the problem

It may be difficult to spot the signs of domestic abuse as it is often a 'hidden' crime. Some signs may include:

- Regular interruptions from a current or ex-partner/family member at work including phone calls, texts, emails and turning up at the workplace or at external events. Workers may feel they must respond immediately to these interruptions for fear of retribution.
- Gifts sent to a worker by current or ex-partner for no apparent reason.
- A worker displaying defensive behaviour or being overly secretive about their private life.
- Regular or sudden absenteeism including medical problems or arriving late/leaving work early without explanation.
- Obsession with leaving work on time.
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
- A worker appearing isolated from family and social networks.
- Sudden and sustained changes in behaviour or performance at work (e.g., becoming quiet, withdrawn, emotional, or angry).
- Reduced quantity or quality of work.
- Depression, insomnia, or fatigue.
- Substance use/dependence, which may be used to cope with the abuse.
- Changes in appearance which could include heavy clothing in the summer, long sleeves and/or heavy makeup, which may be used to cover injuries.
- Injuries with inconsistent or no explanation.
- A worker not wanting to engage with colleagues, including during lunch breaks and on social occasions.
- Insufficient resources, which may indicate financial abuse.

It is important to note that many of the above indicators may not be related to domestic abuse and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. This is not an exhaustive list and please be mindful that indicators may appear at any time, as survivors may experience post-separation abuse.

5. Disclosure

Consider nominating at least two appointed people within the workplace as a confidential first point of contact for those experiencing domestic abuse. Bear in mind that those experiencing domestic abuse may prefer to disclose to someone of the same gender.

Taking a person-centred approach means that care and support focuses on the specific needs of the individual.

There are many reasons why a musician experiencing domestic abuse might find it hard to disclose.

These include:

- A fear of not being believed

- A fear of the perpetrator finding out about the disclosure
- Not recognising that they are experiencing abuse
- A fear of making things worse or of being judged
- Feeling embarrassed, humiliated, and ashamed
- A fear of the impact on their professional standing
- A belief that the abuse is in some way their fault
- Concerns about confidentiality.

6. Clare's Law

It may be useful to remind workers, regardless of gender, of their rights under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as "Clare's Law". This enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending. The aim of this law is to give individuals information regarding their current or ex-partner as to whether they have a history of violence and abusive offending that may pose a risk.

The scheme has two elements: the "Right to Ask" and the "Right to Know." Under the scheme an individual or relevant third party (for example, a family member) can ask the police to check whether a current or ex-partner has a violent or abusive past. This is the "Right to Ask." If records show that an individual may be at risk of domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner, the police will consider disclosing the information.

The "Right to Know" enables the police to make a disclosure on their own initiative if they receive information about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may impact on the safety of that person's current or ex-partner. This could be information arising from a criminal investigation, through statutory or third sector agency involvement, or from another source of police intelligence.

7. Responding appropriately to disclosure

It is a good idea to identify a 'quiet area', which can be used to have confidential conversations, should someone wish to disclose private, sensitive information. This may not always be possible depending on the size of the premises so a private off-site location may need to be sought.

When speaking with a musician who is disclosing domestic abuse you should:

- Acknowledge their courage and the difficulties they must be facing.
- Maintain an open posture.
- Use non-threatening questions to open conversations – examples could be: "How are you feeling?", "How are things in your life?"
- Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful.
- Allow plenty of time and space for them to explain matters.
- Recognise that everyone's circumstances and experiences will be different.
- Adopt a supportive tone reflecting an open work culture where individuals feel safe to disclose issues of domestic abuse.

- Do not be judgmental and avoid language that indicates blame or fault (“Why don’t you just leave?” / “How can you let this happen?” / “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”)
- Keep the language gender neutral and don't make assumptions about the gender of someone's partner.
- Be aware of the parameters of your role and make clear what support you can and cannot provide.
- Refrain from giving advice – for example do not pressurise them into leaving without seeking appropriate specialist advice as this can increase risk.
- Signpost to appropriate onward support. Some options are provided in the sample policy and a fuller list on the MU website.

If a musician has made a disclosure of domestic abuse, asking the following questions can help to ensure an appropriate safety plan is put in place:

- What support would you find helpful (there is no one-size-fits all)?
- Does the person causing harm know where you work?
- Does the person causing harm work for the same organisation?
- Have you been followed on your way to/from work?
- Are you experiencing abuse whilst at work? For example, the person causing harm visiting the workplace?
- Does the person causing harm have your work contact details i.e., a direct telephone number or email address?
- Are you comfortable for information to be shared with colleagues to ensure any changes are implemented and a safe response can be coordinated?

Employers and engagers should have due regard to other members of the workforce who may be triggered by a colleague’s disclosure of abuse and signpost to appropriate support.

8. Flexibility

This guidance recognises that it may not be possible or appropriate for employers and engagers to extend unlimited paid or unpaid leave to employees experiencing domestic abuse.

However, it is recommended that each case is considered individually, and a work plan is created that meets the needs of the musician. This could include temporary adjustments to the musicians’ work patterns as well as temporary flexible working arrangements.

A musician may need to use sick leave in the event they have sustained injuries requiring time off, or they are struggling with their mental health.

It is important to remember that:

- Musicians may want to attend work whilst dealing with the impact of their abuse. It is important to recognise this and work to create a suitable working pattern.
- Musicians might need more flexibility around their working pattern than is usually required, so that the person causing harm cannot track their movements. It is also important to check that the musician has a safe route to work/home.

- If a musician is asked to attend court to give evidence or to secure an injunction, consider allowing them to take this as compassionate leave. They may also need time to make alternative housing or childcare arrangements, and to attend appointments with solicitors or specialist support services.
- Children are often the ones who are impacted by domestic abuse and may need counselling to help them cope and recover. Children can also be direct victims of domestic abuse and may require additional support because of this. If parents/guardians are asked to attend, consider allowing them to mark this absence as compassionate/dependent's leave.
- Employers and engagers should be aware of the impact that domestic abuse may have on work performance and attendance. In the event of absence management processes or redundancy selection matrices, any absence or performance concerns related to domestic abuse should not be used in the scoring process.

This list is not exhaustive, and musicians should be encouraged to discuss what adjustments may be helpful for them.

9. Written records

It is essential to make written records of conversations about domestic abuse, any incidents within the workplace and any workplace adjustments which have been made. These may be called upon as evidence in a civil or criminal court. These records need to be clear, accurate and should give dates, times, and locations. They should be factual and not include assumptions or the views of the person making the record. Witnesses to incidents related to the domestic abuse should also be recorded.

Under data protection law, workers have the right to view all records relating to them, so ensure that all notes are clearly factual and do not contain opinions or additional information not disclosed in the meeting(s). Employers and engagers should ensure that records comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR. Some details are likely to amount to special categories data, to which additional requirements apply.

10. Support

The support offered will look different for every workplace and depend on the resources that are available. It's important to be realistic about the support you can offer.

Practical support for musicians could look like:

- Sharing band lists when booking people for gigs so they know who they are working with.
- Flexible working arrangements.
- Additional paid leave.
- Emergency Accommodation.
- Short term interest free loans or a salary advance.
- Asking for an emergency contact should you not be able to contact them.
- Ensure the musician does not work alone or in isolated areas.
- Agreeing a safe and confidential method of communication, for example, email or face to face communication, which may be safer than phone calls.

- Where phone calls are necessary, it may be helpful to identify a phrase whereby the musician can indicate if they are not safe to talk.
- Review the musicians next of kin information.
- With consent from the musician, alert other staff and create a plan of action should the person causing harm be seen on the premises.

11. Perpetrator support

It may be appropriate to signpost to specialist services musicians who disclose that they themselves are causing harm, whilst ensuring the safety of other workers.

However, you will also want to make it clear that domestic abuse could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for Gross Misconduct.

People causing harm may be signposted to specialist support to help understand and change their behaviour. As with all sensitive information, this should be kept confidential, and records should comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR.

[The Respect Phonenumber](#) offers help for people causing harm who want to change, providing confidential advice and support to help people stop being abusive.

If you believe that the person causing harm may be placing their partner or family member(s) in genuine danger, then you should report it to the police. If the person causing harm is harassing another member of staff, you should follow your bullying and harassment policy. You may also wish to refer to your organisation's conduct and disciplinary policies.

Who created this guidance

This guidance has been drafted with support from [Domestic Abuse Workplace Solutions](#) and using *Sharon's Policy* which was created by [EIDA](#) Ambassador, Sharon Livermore MBE, in collaboration with EIDA, Domestic Abuse Alliance, The HR Dept Ltd., and Domestic Abuse Education.

Sample policy

1. Introduction

This policy covers the internal and external support available to musicians experiencing, or involved in, domestic abuse. Everyone has the right to live free from abuse in any form and the responsibility for abuse lies with the perpetrator. There is an increased awareness of the prevalence of domestic abuse in society and **[insert name of organisation]** understands that there may be colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who want to support friends, colleagues or family members who are going through it.

2. About this policy

This policy applies to all workers, including freelancers. Although women disproportionately experience domestic abuse, men and non-binary people also experience domestic abuse.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Raise awareness of the scope and prevalence of domestic abuse.
- Support all workers, including freelancers, experiencing domestic abuse and promote their health, safety, and well-being at work.
- Respond to individual survivors needs
- Recognise that a worker's ability to work may be impacted directly by the perpetrator of domestic abuse, as well as indirectly owing to the physical and mental impacts of domestic abuse.
- Support Line Managers to help workers who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Assist colleagues of workers who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Reinforce **[insert name of organisation]** 'zero tolerance for behaviour that is unsafe and/or harmful.
- Where appropriate, signpost survivors to specialist services and/or perpetrators who voluntarily wish to seek advice and support to address their behaviour.

3. What is domestic abuse?

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

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

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

4. Support

It is **[insert name of organisation]** intention to deal constructively, compassionately, and sympathetically with cases of domestic abuse. **[insert name of organisation]** will support all those who experience and/or witness domestic abuse. If you are concerned about your own personal situation or that of a colleague, you are encouraged to seek support.

You can speak in confidence to **[insert person to contact]** who can provide initial support, signpost you to support services and help you with any disclosure conversations you would like to have with colleagues and work with you to:

- Discuss and agree ways to help you stay safe in the workplace.
- Signpost you to the appropriate domestic abuse resources; and
- Facilitating referrals.

Line Managers have a role to play in enabling workers experiencing domestic abuse to seek help and support. The role of the Line Manager is to:

- Identify workers who may be experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse, for example, workers coming to work with unexplained injuries, who appear distressed, have unexplained periods of time off work, or show a deterioration in performance.
- Referring or seeking guidance from trained domestic abuse professionals if there is a disclosure of abuse.
- Provide initial help and support, including advice on the options available for the worker and referrals to appropriate sources of professional help, whilst supporting the worker to make their own decisions.
- Protect confidentiality as far as possible.
- Discuss measures to prioritise safety at work and ensure that the health and safety of all workers is protected.
- Enable the worker to remain productive, efficient and at work.
- Recognise that people who have experienced a traumatic event can experience long-term impacts.

[Insert name of organisation] will not discriminate against a survivor of domestic abuse for requesting support or for any other reason related to their status as a survivor of domestic abuse.

5. Confidentiality

Where a worker has discussions with their Line Manager, confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible in line with **[insert name of organisation]** procedures. There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These circumstances occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, where a high risk to safety has been identified, or where we need to act to protect the safety of members of the public, including other colleagues.

Where an individual or family members are in genuine danger this may be reported to the police. This will be subject to prior discussion with the worker wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Personal data will be stored in accordance with **[insert name of organisation]** data protection policy.

6. Safety at work

We acknowledge our duty to protect the health, safety, and well-being of all workers at work, including those workers affected by domestic abuse. This includes situations where the person causing harm is harassing the worker at work, for example, turning up at the workplace unannounced, constantly telephoning/e-mailing/texting the worker during the working day or harassing the workers colleagues.

[insert name of organisation] understands how challenging it can be for people experiencing domestic abuse to disclose. We actively encourage all workers to disclose when they are experiencing domestic abuse so they can be provided with support. Other workers should also disclose to **[insert name of organisation]** if they are being harassed by a colleague's current or former partner or family member.

7. People causing harm

[insert name of organisation] will not tolerate or condone domestic abuse, regardless of the identity or seniority of the person causing harm. If **[insert name of organisation]** becomes aware that a worker is or may be causing harm, it will take appropriate action, which could include disciplinary action under the **[insert name of organisation]** disciplinary policy.

Any domestic abuse that endangers another worker or uses **[insert name of organisation]** equipment to inflict that abuse, such as mobile phones or laptops, may result in disciplinary action under **[insert name of organisation]** disciplinary policy up to and including dismissal for Gross Misconduct. Disciplinary action may be appropriate in some circumstances even where the person causing harms behaviour takes place outside work.

[insert name of organisation] will signpost workers who disclose that they are causing harm and who genuinely want to change their behaviour to specialist services. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

8. Reasonable adjustments

Where a worker needs time off work or flexible working arrangements to access support, manage any legal issues or family requirements, **[insert name of organisation]** will provide a reasonable amount time off and/or agree to flexible working arrangements.

Workers who need time off work and/or flexible working arrangements should discuss this with their Line Manager to agree how much leave is required, how and when it will be taken and whether leave will be paid or unpaid.

9. Guidance Notes

Please refer to the MU guidance notes for employers and engagers for practical details on how to manage domestic abuse in the workplace.

10. Support services

If you believe a musician are in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

[National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#): Offer free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.

[Womens Aid](#): Offer support for all aspects of domestic abuse.

[Victim Support](#): Provide a free and 24-hour Support line on 0808 1689 111.

[Refuge](#): Provide a 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247.

[Respect Phoneline](#): Is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are abusing their partners and families.

[Music Minds Matter](#)

If you work in music and are struggling to cope then call [Music Minds Matter](#), a free, 24/7 charity, which will listen, support and help. It doesn't have to be a crisis, or even about music.

You will speak to an accredited counsellor who will offer emotional support, advice and information. Where appropriate they may also signpost you to other specialist services and offer debt or legal advice. **Call: 0808 802 8008**

[Music Support](#)

A confidential and non-judgmental listening ear from trained industry peers who all have personal experience of the music & live events industries and the issues that Music Support covers. **Call [0800 030 6789](#) Monday – Friday: 09:00 – 17:00 (except for bank holidays)**

This is not an exhaustive list and there are likely to be local charities and support groups in your area that offer help and advice to those experiencing domestic abuse. These can be found via the [BrightSky app](#)

Find a fuller list of [domestic abuse support services on the MU website](#).