



University of Essex



# Domestic Abuse Policy

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Authors:	People and Culture / Student Life Directorate
Publication date:	May 2023
Amended:	-
Review date:	May 2026

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# Domestic Abuse Policy

## Policy Statement

1. The University of Essex (the 'University') is committed to providing an inclusive environment where every member of our community is safe and feels safe. In 2021, it was estimated that more than 185,000 university students and staff across the UK experience domestic abuse each year<sup>1</sup>. During the Coronavirus pandemic there has been a great increase in domestic abuse, coupled with statutory support services coming under pressure due to fewer resources and due to having to adapt operations to Covid-related guidelines and requirements.
2. The University strongly condemns domestic abuse. Domestic abuse has a prevailing and widespread destructive impact on all involved and the wider community. The University seeks to encourage those affected to feel comfortable and able to disclose incidents and receive support which, where possible, will be treated confidentially (see section 31 for information on confidentiality). Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

## Aim

3. The aims of this policy are to:
  - raise awareness of the issue of domestic abuse to all members of the University
  - improve recognition and support for those who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse (including signposting the relevant support and advice available) and empower staff and students to respond appropriately to any disclosures that are made to them and provide appropriate support
  - support awareness-raising and inform cross-institutional training needs
  - engender a culture of openness and encourage open conversations without fear of stigma, harassment, or discrimination
  - develop a point of contact for staff and students that is trained in the internal and external support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/news/over-185000-uk-university-staff-and-students-suffer-domestic-abuse-every-year>

- in some cases, to support appropriate action against those accused of perpetrating domestic abuse

## Scope

4. We are committed to developing a culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse, and one that recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. The University has developed this policy following focus groups and consultation including with academic and professional services staff, Student Union representatives, staff networks, and trade unions to support our staff and students' health and wellbeing, specifically in relation to issues around domestic abuse.
5. This policy applies to all students and staff of the University, academic and professional, inclusive of those on all types of employment contracts as well as those with contracts for services. It applies whether staff are working on campus or working from home. Staff at all grade levels and within all job roles should be treated in an equitable and consistent way.
6. This policy should be read in conjunction with our other policies and guidance, including:
  - [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
  - [Tackling Misogyny, Harassment and Violence Against Women Policy \(.pdf\)](#)
  - [Our Zero Tolerance Approach to Harassment and Bullying](#)
  - [Campus Security Policy \(.pdf\)](#)
  - [Non-disclosure Agreements](#)
  - [Policy on Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk \(.pdf\)](#)
  - [Data Protection Policy \(.pdf\)](#)
7. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

## Our approach

8. We understand that making the decision to report domestic abuse can be difficult. We want to reassure victims and survivors of domestic abuse that they will receive thoughtful and sensitive support. Any report will remain confidential unless one of the circumstances mentioned in sections 39 and 40 apply, which include a person being at immediate risk of harm. Any report of domestic abuse will be treated seriously. We want to ensure that all members of our University community feel confident enough to report domestic abuse and that they are able to seek the support they need.

9. The University adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards perpetrators of abuse, or anyone assisting them. Zero tolerance means that: (i) we will take action; and (ii) the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case. This may include disciplinary action and could result in dismissal from the University.

## Intersectionality

10. Domestic abuse can disproportionately affect individuals with protected characteristics<sup>2</sup>, therefore it is important to be aware of the impact of intersectionality when domestic abuse occurs. We recognise the complexities of intersecting identities such as race/ethnicity, disability, age, sex, pregnancy, gender reassignment, and/or sexual orientation, and the impact these identities may have on victims' and survivors' experiences of domestic abuse, the additional barriers they may face, and their ability to access support at the University. It is fundamentally important that this is recognised when dealing with reports that are made. Further information is set out in the Roles and Responsibilities section.
11. With intersectionality in mind, messages about domestic abuse and the support available should be accessible and in multiple languages and formats, including Easy Read, British Sign Language and braille. This policy and other guidance will be made available in a range of accessible formats on request to [inclusion@essex.ac.uk](mailto:inclusion@essex.ac.uk).

## What is domestic abuse?

12. Domestic Abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between two individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other. This could, for example, include people who are (or have been) intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.
13. Domestic abuse is complex and can take many forms. It can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse:
- psychological
  - physical
  - sexual
  - financial

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>



■ emotional

14. 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.
15. 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. This definition includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and forced marriage, and is clear that victims and survivors are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.
16. The University recognises that domestic abuse is a workplace and university issue because the abuse that an individual experiences at home is likely to have a direct impact on every aspect of their life, including their work and/or student life (and may even extend to the workplace and/or university itself).
17. The University recognises that online and digital platforms and social media are increasingly being used to perpetrate domestic abuse, coercion and control. The University takes all forms of domestic abuse seriously including technology-facilitated abuse.
18. The University also acknowledges that domestic abuse may be experienced by any staff member, irrespective of their level of seniority or role within the organisation, or by any student. We also recognise that a staff member or student's children who have seen, heard or experienced the domestic abuse are also victims. Whatever the individual's role or status, we recognise that their ability to concentrate and perform at work or at university is likely to be affected.
19. The signs of domestic abuse are not always visible or obvious, and victims and survivors experiencing abuse may attempt to hide the effects of that abuse. They may also provide an alternative explanation for any signs of abuse that are apparent to colleagues or be reluctant to engage in conversation. Some victims and survivors may not identify their experiences as those of domestic abuse at all.
20. If you are unsure whether you or someone close to you is in an abusive relationship, you can refer to Appendix 1 and 2 for examples and signs of domestic abuse.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Manager/heads of department**

21. Managers have an important role in ensuring the wellbeing of staff who have made a report of domestic abuse as do any members of staff who engage with students. They should ensure that matters are followed up and refer those who have either experienced or witnessed

incidents to the relevant support. Managers also have a responsibility to be aware of and encourage their teams to be aware of expected standards and the impact of negative behaviours. All staff are responsible for completing their own essential training, which sets out the expected standards at the University, and managers are responsible for overseeing essential training completion rates for their team.

22. If managers need advice on a situation that they think might include domestic abuse, they can contact the Employee Relations Team in People and Culture on [hremployeerelations@essex.ac.uk](mailto:hremployeerelations@essex.ac.uk)

## **All staff and students**

23. We all have responsibility for our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. Any staff or students who experience domestic abuse are strongly encouraged to report it and to seek support.
24. We encourage an environment in which colleagues and students can have open conversations about domestic abuse without fear of stigma, harassment, or discrimination. We will take any report of domestic abuse seriously and acknowledge that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator, not the victim.
25. While we do not expect staff members or students to become experts on domestic abuse, we do expect all staff members and students to be supportive of colleagues or other students who may be affected by domestic abuse. We also encourage staff members and students to be familiar with some of the signs of domestic abuse (see section 28 below), and to raise these through the reporting mechanisms described in this policy, while recognising that these signs may also be indicative of other issues. We recognise that the University must exercise caution in its actions following the identification of an instance of domestic violence as this may put the victim and survivor of domestic abuse at risk of harm.
26. The University has a legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of those who are under 18 years of age, or adults at risk, within the community and this obligation extends to all staff, students, and visitors, and these policies and procedures apply in instances of domestic violence when a person under 18 years of age is involved as a witness or victim and survivor of domestic abuse, or when an adult at risk is involved.
27. If you are unsure whether a particular case constitutes a safeguarding concern, you can reach out to Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO) within People and Culture, and the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS). More information on safeguarding can also be found in the [Policy on Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk](#).



# Signs of abuse to look out for

28. Signs<sup>3</sup> that someone might be experiencing domestic abuse (some of these signs may reflect a range of sensitive issues):

- work productivity signs

- change in the person's working patterns, for example: frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
- drop in student attendance/grades, staff work performance, meeting work/assignment deadlines, and how they communicate/interact in class/meetings with colleagues or tutors/peers
- unusual reluctance to engage with colleagues/workplace/campus culture (or change in usual level)
- when working remotely/online, appearing anxious/not attending or using camera when expected
- reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- change in the use of the phone/email: for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- lack of access to basic equipment or the internet when working from home (or monitoring of access)
- spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason
- conduct out of character with previous employment history
- changes in behaviour or demeanour: for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed etc
- isolating themselves from colleagues and withdrawal from or lack of participation in meetings and events

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<sup>3</sup> [Department of Health and Safelives \(.pdf\)](#) (n.d.) Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse: Practical guidance for line managers, Human Resources and Employee Assistance Programmes

- obsession with timekeeping
- secretive regarding home life
- worried about leaving children at home with abuser

#### ■ physical signs

- visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations
- change in the pattern or amount of make-up used
- change in the manner of dress: for example, clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries
- substance use/misuse
- fatigue/sleep disorders

#### ■ other signs

- interception of text and other messages, letters, and emails
- partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace
- partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule
- control of finances (for example, wages being paid into a new bank account or an individual not being given enough money to buy food or pay bills)
- an individual assuming sole responsibility for childcare arrangements
- flowers/gifts sent to employee for no apparent reason
- isolation from family/friends

#### ■ psychological signs:

- fear of current/former partner or family member
- expresses that a family member (child/parent) is at risk of harm from current/former partner or other family member
- mentions abusive behaviour fleetingly, casually, or in other terms ('It's a shame I can't join in, but they get cross if I'm not back in time')
- frequently cry and/or act anxious (online or on campus)

## Reporting Procedure for Students and Staff

29. Students and staff experiencing domestic abuse can report it and get support through the Report and Support Service. The Report and Support system allows you to make a report and ask for contact from an adviser or to make an anonymous report. Harassment Support Workers that are assigned to cases through Report and Support undergo specialist training and can provide support and help signpost you to appropriate services and channels.
30. Where reports are made anonymously, the University is less likely to be able to take any action. This may be because we have not been given details about the alleged perpetrator or victim and survivor or because we do not have sufficient information to investigate fully.
31. The level of action that the University can take depends on whether the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff or student at the University or not. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff or student at the University, the assigned Harassment Support Worker can help you understand the formal procedures available and how you can use them. Regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator is a university member, Harassment Support Workers can signpost you to support services such as health, counselling, or any other relevant services.
32. A report can be made through the Report and Support online system at any time. Visit the Report and Support system online for more details.
33. In addition to the Report and Support system, there are additional channels and people that you can report incidents to or get support from. You can report an incident through Report and Support at any time during or after an incident or series of incidents occur.
34. Students may choose to disclose, report, or seek support from a Student Union Representative, Wellbeing Assessor within the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service, a personal tutor, a course representative or peer. Staff may choose to disclose to colleagues, managers, or a member of the Inclusion Team ([inclusion@essex.ac.uk](mailto:inclusion@essex.ac.uk)).
35. While those approached by victims or survivors should attempt to agree next steps with the individual and maintain confidentiality, there may be occasions where it is appropriate for the matter to be escalated internally (for example, to a senior individual or manager) or to an external agency where there are concerns about the safety of the individual or others connected to them, such as family members or work colleagues. Where possible, we will seek to obtain the consent of the individual before making any external disclosures, and any disclosures will be made on a strictly 'need-to-know' basis. People and Culture can provide advice on next steps on cases involving staff members, and the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Team can provide advice on cases involving students.

# Support

## Support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse

36. The University recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process, not a one-time event. As such, University and Student Union representatives will work together cooperatively to tackle domestic abuse and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
37. Where domestic abuse has been reported, more specific support can be provided around individual circumstances, but the following is a list of general support that may be provided:
- unplanned absences and temporary difficulty with timekeeping being viewed sympathetically
  - special paid leave for employees, and permitting student leave to attend relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
  - temporary or permanent changes to times and patterns of attendance
  - changes to specific duties (e.g. to avoid potential contact with an abuser)
  - redeployment or relocation
  - measures to ensure a safe environment (including, the provision of a quiet room to make and receive confidential calls, changes to building security and
  - surveillance, the diversion of emails, and/or changes to ensure that an individual's whereabouts or contact details are not disclosed or made accessible).
  - payment of wages into a different bank account, or
  - using other existing policies
  - access to counselling/support services, and/or
  - signposting and guidance to specialist services

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and we encourage victims and survivors to consider and discuss what other arrangements or adjustments may be helpful given their circumstances and how these might be communicated to others, if necessary.

## Safety planning

38. The University will prioritise the safety of individuals if they make it known that they are subject to domestic abuse. When an individual discloses domestic abuse, the University will encourage and signpost contact to a specialist support agency who can undertake a

Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

39. The University will work with the individual and any specialist agencies involved to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety at the University and at home, as well as address any risks there may be to other people.

## **Responding to a report**

40. Anyone supporting a victim or survivor in such matters should demonstrate an understanding that it is difficult for individuals to disclose domestic abuse by:

- believing the individual
- reassuring the individual
- being sensitive, non-judgemental, practical, supportive, and discrete
- finding time and a private space to listen
- prioritising safety
- not contacting the abuser
- providing support, guidance, and signposting
- not compelling the individual to share or accept information should they not wish to
- calling 999 if the individual is in immediate danger

41. Further information on how to handle and respond to a disclosure of domestic abuse can be found in Appendix 2.

42. If you receive a disclosure, you can signpost victims and survivors of domestic abuse to the Report and Support system, where they can get assigned a trained Harassment Support Worker for confidential support and advice.

## **Confidentiality and right to privacy**

43. It is important that information is treated with the utmost confidence and the University respects an individual's right to confidentiality. However, where there are safeguarding concerns about children or adults at risk, individuals must follow the protocols set out in the Policy on Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk and seek advice from the University's Designated Safeguarding Officers.

44. There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a matter to be escalated internally or to an external agency where there are concerns about the safety of the individual or others connected to them, or there may be a need to contact the police where there is an imminent threat to life or risk of harm.

## **If the victim and the perpetrator both work and/or study at the University**

45. In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work and/or study at the University, we will take appropriate action. In addition to considering disciplinary action against the person who is allegedly perpetrating abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact at the University. Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor. For employees, this may include a change of duties, a temporary change of location, or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or offices. Where possible, and if it is deemed appropriate following discussion with the victim/survivor, we will seek to ensure that it is the perpetrator's, not the victim's, arrangements that are changed. We will also review access to our buildings, to staff, students, and visitors.

## **Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse**

46. Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees or students will not be condoned under any circumstances, and any employee or student who is alleged to have committed abuse during working hours or using our equipment will be subject to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy or Code of Student Conduct. Conduct outside of the University may also be treated as a disciplinary matter if we consider that it is relevant to the individual's association or relationship with the University, regardless of whether that conduct is subject to criminal investigation or not.
47. The University understands that for every victim of domestic abuse, there is also a perpetrator, who themselves may be experiencing (or have experienced) significant difficulties or trauma. The University recognises its role in encouraging and supporting individuals to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds and will seek to do so without judgment or condemnation.
48. The University is committed to ensuring that:
- allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
  - all individuals will receive guidance and support



- confidentiality will be maintained where possible, and information restricted only to those who need-to- know whilst following safeguarding protocols
- investigations will be thorough and independent
- steps will be taken to mitigate further risks to the victim/survivor and other people
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity

49. The procedure is intended to be safety-focussed and supportive rather than purely punitive. The University 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 some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue with certain activities or duties in their current role(s) or attend a current course, due to a caution or conviction.
50. If it becomes evident that an employee or student has made a malicious false allegation that another person is perpetrating abuse, then this may be treated as a disciplinary offence and action may be taken. Please note that a malicious allegation differs from an unsubstantiated allegation.

# Advice and support

## Emergency and Security Services

Service	Contact details
Emergency Services	999
NHS Emergency Line	111
University Medical Practice	Phone: 01206 794484 Email: hcentre@essex.ac.uk
Campus Security – Colchester	Phone: 2222
Campus Security – Loughton	Phone: 5983
Campus Security - Southend	Phone: 01702 328400 or 07872 7988085
Safeguarding Team	Phone: 01206 872984 Email: safeguard@essex.ac.uk
Security	Phone: 2125/3148 Email: patrol@essex.ac.uk
Colchester Police Station	Phone: 01206 762212
Loughton Police Station	Phone: 01279 641212
Essex Police	Phone: 01245 491491 Police – non-emergency Phone: 101

# Student Help and Support Services

Service	What they do	Contact details
Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS)	SWIS provides support to students to ensure that they can achieve their full potential. SWIS can signpost students to the support available for mental and emotional health, disability support, academic concerns, financial worries, and accommodation issues.	Phone: 01206 873133  Email: wellbeing@essex.ac.uk
Report and Support	An online system that allows staff and students to all forms of bullying, harassment, abuse, and violence. Reports can be made anonymously or can be assigned to a trained Harassment Support Worker, who will help the reporter get the support they need and help escalate the issue if the reporter wishes to.	Website and online form  Email: harass@essex.ac.uk
Student Services Hub	A place for students to get advice, information, and support related to all aspects of university life. The Student Services Hub can signpost students to services and procedures related to health, wellbeing, and access.	Phone: 01206 874000 (for all campuses)  Live chat  Ask the Hub online enquiry form  Email: askthehub@essex.ac.uk
Students' Union Advice Centre	Students can get free, confidential, and impartial advice related to a range of topics from the Students' Union, including but not limited to	Located in SQ3 on Colchester Campus  Phone: 01206 863211  Email: su@essex.ac.uk

Service	What they do	Contact details
	harassment, hate incidents, and complaints about the university.	
Student Progress Team	The Student Progress team handles complaints made by students about fellow students or staff members at the University of Essex.	Email: studentprogress@essex.ac.uk
Nightline	Nightline is a confidential listening and emotional support, and information service run by University of Essex students. During term-time, they are available 24 hours of the day.	Phone: 01206 87 2020/2022/4062  Email: nlhelp@essex.ac.uk
Faith Centre	The Faith Centre provides a confidential listening ear, pastoral support, and spiritual support. There is a Faith Centre on each of the campuses.	Phone: 01206 873952  Email: faithcentreadmin@essex.ac.uk
Report and Support	An online system that allows staff and students to all forms of bullying, harassment, abuse, and violence. Reports can be made anonymously or can be assigned to a trained Harassment Support Worker, who will help the reporter get the support they need and help escalate the issue if the reporter wishes to.	Website and online form  Email: harass@essex.ac.uk
People and Culture	The People and Culture team is the HR team at the University of Essex and can signpost managers to various support services and procedures that are available to them.	hremployeerelations@essex.ac.uk

Service	What they do	Contact details
Inclusion Team	The Inclusion team sits within the wider People and Culture team. The Inclusion team can signpost individuals to the required support services.	inclusion@essex.ac.uk
UCU	UCU is the trade union that represents all staff at grades 7 and above. They can be contacted for assistance and support.	<p>Keser Richardson-Dawes, UCU Office Manager at Colchester Campus</p> <p>Staff Help and Support Services</p> <p>Phone: Phone: 01206 874967</p> <p>Email: krichardson-dawes@ucu.org.uk</p> <p>General Email: ucu@ucumail.essex.ac.uk</p>
Unite	Unite is the trade union that represents all staff. They can be contacted for assistance and support.	<p>Branch Chair: Colin McAuley</p> <p>Phone: 01206873974 Email: ccmcau@essex.ac.uk</p> <p>General Email: unitetheunion@essex.ac.uk</p>
Unison	Unison is the trade union that represents all professional services staff. They can be contacted for assistance and support.	<p>Branch Chair: David English</p> <p>Email: dengli@essex.ac.uk</p> <p>UoE General Email: unison@essex.ac.uk</p>
Faith Centre	The Faith Centre provides a confidential listening ear, pastoral support, and spiritual support. There is a Faith Centre on each of the campuses.	<p>Phone: 01206 873952</p> <p>Email: faithcentreadmin@essex.ac.uk</p>

## External Help and Support Services

Service	What they do	Contact details
Synergy Essex	<p>Synergy Essex is a partnership of rape and sexual abuse centres in Essex: Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA), South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) and Southend-on-Sea Rape Crisis (SOSRC). They have a first contact team who can provide and signpost to support services, and Synergy Essex can also provide advocacy, support, and specialist counselling.</p>	Phone (Helpline): 0300 003 7777
Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA)	CARA provides independent and specialist advice for victims and survivors of sexual violence and child sexual abuse.	<p>Phone: 01206 769795</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:info@caraessex.org.uk">info@caraessex.org.uk</a></p>
South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC)	SERRIC provides support to anyone in the South and West Essex area who has experienced or is experiencing any form of sexual violence or abuse.	<p>Phone (Helpline): 0300 003 7777</p> <p>Office: 01375381322 Email: <a href="mailto:sericc@sericc.org.uk">sericc@sericc.org.uk</a></p>
Southend-on-Sea Rape Crisis (SOSRC)	SOSRC provides support for all victims and survivors of sexual violence and rape. They provide support to anyone who is experiencing sexual violence or has experiences it in the past. They provide services in	<p>Phone (Helpline): 0300 003 7777</p> <p>Office: 01702 667590</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:info@sosrc.org.uk">info@sosrc.org.uk</a></p>



Service	What they do	Contact details
	Southend-on-Sea, Castle Point and Rochford.	
Essex Compass	Essex Compass is a partnership of several domestic abuse support agencies including Safe Steps, Changing Pathways and The Next Chapter and provides support for domestic abuse victims and survivors across Southend, Essex, and Thurrock. It is a single point of access for victims and survivors of domestic abuse to get the help and support they need, and the staff are trained to be able to direct people to the appropriate services where needed.	Phone (Helpline): 0330 333 7444
Safe Steps	Safe Steps provides assistance and support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse in the Southend and wider Essex area.	Southend Phone: 01702 302333  Wider Essex (Helpline): 0330 3337444
Changing Pathways	Changing Pathways provides support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse and stalking in Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Thurrock, Harlow and Epping Forest.	Phone (Helpline): 0330 333 7444  Email: <a href="mailto:referrals@changingpathways.org">referrals@changingpathways.org</a>
Next Chapter Colchester	Next Chapter Colchester works with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and provides help and support. They are able to signpost to different services	Phone (Helpline): 0330 333 7444  Office: 01206 500585

Service	What they do	Contact details
	and can also provide refuge and accommodation to those who may need it.	Email: info@thenextchapter.org.uk
Oakwood Place - Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Essex	Oakwood Place offers support and advice to victims and survivors of sexual violence and/or abuse. They are also able to offer medical assessments and treatments for some cases. An appointment is needed to access their services and can be made through the given phone number or email address and will be set up within 24-48 hours of making contact.	Phone: 01277 240620 Email: Essex.sarc@nhs.net
Colchester/Southend Samaritans	Samaritans is an organisation that provides a listening and support for people, not matter what issue they are facing. Their aim is to reduce the risks that can lead to suicide and provide support for those that are at higher risk of taking their own lives.	Phone: 116 123 (free from any phone, national helpline)  Colchester Branch Phone: 0330 094 5717 Email: jo@samaritans.org.uk

## Document Control Panel

Field	Description
<b>Title</b>	Domestic Abuse Policy
<b>Policy Classification</b>	Policy
<b>Security Classification</b>	Open
<b>Security Rationale</b>	N/A
<b>Policy Manager Role</b>	Director of Inclusion
<b>Nominated Contact</b>	inclusion@essex.ac.uk
<b>Responsible UoE Section</b>	People & Culture
<b>Approval Body</b>	Council
<b>Signed Off Date</b>	November 2022
<b>Publication Status</b>	Published
<b>Published Date</b>	Spring 2023
<b>Last Review Date</b>	November 2022
<b>Minimum Review Frequency</b>	3-Yearly
<b>Review Date</b>	October 2025
<b>UoE Identifier</b>	0183

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact the nominated contact at inclusion@essex.ac.uk

# Appendix 1

## Types of abuse

### Physical abuse

This can include hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, choking, use of weapons, and threats of violence.

### Sexual abuse

This can be described as any behaviour (physical, emotional, verbal, online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, harmful, exploitative, or unwanted that is inflicted on a person, and includes taking advantage of their incapacity to give informed consent. Particularly pertinent to university settings, it is estimated that around 15% female and 3% male students are sexually abused on campus each year, often due to a toxic atmosphere caused by 'lad culture'.

### Economic or financial abuse

This is an element of coercive behaviour, and one that often co-occurs with other forms of abuse. It interferes with a victim's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation, and utilities. This can make the victim economically dependent on the abuser and limit their ability to escape to safety. Examples of economic abuse include having sole control of the family income, preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits, interfering with a victim's education, training, or employment, not allowing or controlling access to mobile phone, transport, utilities, or food, and damaging a victim's property.

### Controlling or coercive behaviour (or emotional/psychological abuse)

Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts or assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a victim. Examples include a victim being isolated from family or friends, to limit or prevent outside support; monitoring their activities throughout the day; denying them freedom or autonomy (such as preventing them from going to university, or if they go out, stalking their every move, and taking their phone and changing their passwords). This may also include controlling aspects of a victim's health and body, such as controlling how much they eat, sleep, or time spent in the bathroom.

### Stalking

Often committed by ex-partners, this is a specific type of harassment, often described as a pattern of unwanted, fixated, or obsessive behaviour that is intrusive and causes fear of violence or serious harm.

For example, abusers may bombard victims and survivors with unwanted and often threatening phone contact, and physical stalking at their home or place of work or study.

## **Digital and online abuse**

This can be described as technology-facilitated abuse that can include controlling and coercive behaviours, such as cyber (or digital) stalking, threatening or nuisance phone calls and emails, location tracking, online harassment, and dissemination of intimate images (commonly referred to as ‘revenge porn’, this term minimises the harm it causes victims and survivors and is increasingly referred to as image-based sexual abuse). Digital and online abuse is a serious and widespread problem affecting people of all ages. A recent UK poll of over 2,000 people reported that 7% of adults had experienced threats about intimate or sexual images or films being shared without consent had their intimate pictures shared without consent, and this number rose to 14% and 11% for women and men between the ages of 18-34<sup>4</sup>. Overwhelmingly, the victims and survivors of digital and online abuse were women.

## **‘Honour’-based abuse (including forced marriage) and FGM**

The Crown Prosecution Service (2017) defines ‘honour’ abuse as ‘an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community’s code of behaviour.’ Types of ‘honour’ abuse are wide-ranging, including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, forced marriage, withdrawal from education, isolation, imprisonment, kidnapping and trafficking. Although ‘honour’ abuse victims and survivors in the UK are typically young South Asian or Middle Eastern females, victims and survivors are not confined to one ethnic group, age, or gender. For example, lesser acknowledged are victims and survivors from other minority and/or marginalised populations in the UK, including females of Mediterranean, Turkish heritage or of Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage. Approximately one-fifth of cases reported to the Home Office’s Forced Marriage Unit (2018) involve males. Although female genital mutilation (FGM) victims and survivors are typically aged under 15, FGM perpetrators may be staff or students.

## **Spiritual abuse**

This can be described as any attempt to exert power and control over someone using faith, religion, or beliefs. The Faith and Violence against Women and Girls Coalition noted that those in a position to help often overlook the significant barriers victims and survivors face in getting help due to the victim’s religious identity, faith community, and the spiritual abuse they have suffered at the hands of their abuser(s).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://refuge.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Naked-Threat-Report.pdf>

## **Pet abuse**

Domestic abuse and pet abuse frequently co-occur. Research by the Dogs Trust Freedom Project (a fostering service for people fleeing domestic abuse and going to a refuge) found that of 369 professionals working in the domestic abuse sector, 90% reported cases in which a pet had also been abused, and over half were aware of cases in which pets were killed<sup>5</sup>. Often used as a means of controlling victims and survivors, over 95% of professionals stated that some survivors would not leave home knowing their pet was unsafe.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vetclick.com/news/new-research-shows-scale-of-abuse-against-animals-in-domestic-abuse-cases-p7885.php>



# Appendix 2

## Responding to a report of domestic abuse

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse - each victim and survivor, their experience, and needs will differ. Workplace studies show that the stigma of domestic abuse makes it difficult for staff members to disclose abuse until they are at risk of being disciplined or dismissed for misinterpreted performance or attendance issues. It is important therefore that if any member of staff or student seeks help or support for domestic abuse, that they are treated with respect and listened to.

### ✓ Do

- Speak to them in a private space where they feel safe
- Listen, believe, and acknowledge
- Tell them it's not their fault
- Reassure them they're not alone and signpost appropriate services
- Respect their background, culture, and beliefs

### X Don't

- Ask questions like 'Why don't you just leave?'
- Make assumptions based on the persons beliefs, values, age, sexuality, or gender identity
- Force the issue – it might take several tries before they are ready to talk
- Speak to the family or friends of the victim and survivor of domestic abuse