

DOMESTIC ABUSE

POLICY  
GUIDANCE

for

UK UNIVERSITIES

2021

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**“This will be a valuable resource for all leaders in helping to ensure that our students and staff are supported to have the best possible experience at university and to help build a stronger, more equitable university culture.”**

Professor Julia Buckingham CBE, President, Universities UK

**DOMESTIC  
ABUSE  
POLICY  
GUIDANCE  
FOR UK  
UNIVERSITIES**



## Dr Roxanne Khan

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Dr Roxanne Khan is an expert in interpersonal violence based at the University of Central Lancashire. She is an award-winning author who, for over two decades, has researched and published extensively on the issue of domestic abuse victimisation and perpetration, presenting her work at national and international conferences.

Published last year, her policy report *Harmful Traditional Practices in the Workplace: Guidance for Best Practice* remained in the top 15 most accessed resources on COVID-19 across the UK, USA, New Zealand, and Australia (academic repositories) and has been endorsed or adopted by key organisations, including NHS Employers, the Crown Prosecution Service, and Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse.

Dr Khan is founder and director of Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), a leading multi-disciplinary network that conducts aggression research and develops inclusive, evidence-based strategies to improve safeguarding policymaking and practice. She is committed to protecting victims of domestic violence, including those at risk of 'honour' abuse and forced marriage. She is privileged to work with local and national domestic abuse charities across the UK.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Over 185,000\* UK university staff and students suffer domestic abuse or violence every year.

*In March 2016, after seven months at university, Emily Drouet took her own life. A vibrant 21-year-old law student, Emily had been subjected to a campaign of harrowing mental and physical abuse from her boyfriend who she had only dated for several months. A few years her senior, he was a fellow student who lived in the same halls of residence. On the night she died, CCTV footage showed him leaving Emily's flat; soon after she was found by concerned friends. Emily had hanged herself.*

*In court, the student who abused Emily admitted acting in a threatening and abusive manner towards her, sending her messages with offensive content and assaulting her by choking her. At sentencing, he was found guilty of assault - the judge branded him "controlling and violent." Sentenced to 12-month's supervision and 180-hours community service, he avoided a prison sentence. Expelled from that university, he was offered a place at another university where he lived in halls of residence while studying.<sup>1</sup>*

We have opened this guidance with Emily's tragic story as a cautionary tale. Emily, and countless other students and staff suffering domestic abuse, are central to the development of this policy guidance, as are the UK universities where they work and study. HARM network has conducted research and consulted with leading experts to present policymakers with this guidance in order to prevent a similar tragedy happening at other UK universities. In the following pages, we explain the necessity for, and benefits of, developing inclusive domestic abuse policy to support staff and students, to enhance the reputation of the university, as well as business operations.

UK universities are national assets at the heart of every city. They are agents of social justice and mobility contributing to social and cultural vitality. To support universities in upholding this ethos, this guidance makes a compelling legal, moral and financial business case for policymakers to develop domestic abuse policy for both staff and students. While reading the following pages, we ask that policymakers keep in mind that behind every single statistic is a backstory, in which victims and their loved ones have suffered untold trauma and grief.

\*See Appendix 2: Prevalence calculation.





When you say the phrase ‘domestic abuse’, young girls think it doesn’t apply to them.

They imagine marriage, a mortgage, a family... even the term ‘woman’ seems alien when you’re a teenager.

It means that they don’t associate what’s happening to them with abuse, they don’t always realise that it’s wrong.

Fiona Drouet MBE,  
CEO, Emily Test  
Emily Drouet’s Mother

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), year ending March 2020, an estimated 1.6 million women and 757,000 men experienced domestic abuse in the last year.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of higher education, the CSEW revealed that female students were more than twice as likely than male students to have experienced abuse. Furthermore, staff and students with a disability were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse. In occupational terms, the difference was greatest for full-time students, where 10.5% of females and 4.8% of males had experienced domestic abuse in the last year.<sup>2</sup> While this data clearly illustrates that both women and men experience domestic abuse, it is particularly important to understand that unlike women, when men experience domestic abuse, it is not as a result of the embedded, structural inequalities against them due to their sex.<sup>3</sup>

There are no estimates on the number of domestic abuse victims currently working or studying at UK universities. To gauge the extent of the potential problem in terms of staff and student numbers, HARM network calculated estimates using the Crime Survey data for 2020, and UK staff and student numbers statistics for 2019/2020 (see Appendix 2 for calculation method).

This provided the following estimates of annual domestic abuse prevalence among staff and students at UK universities:

- 162,073 students (full-/part-time) experience domestic abuse annually.
- 23,760 university staff experience domestic abuse annually.

### **Rapid Review: Domestic abuse policies at universities across the UK**

In response to these troubling prevalence estimates, in January 2021, HARM network conducted a rapid review to evaluate the extent and types of domestic abuse policy at universities across the UK.<sup>4</sup> This included an academic literature review of domestic abuse policy in higher education, a search of university webpages to identify publicly available domestic abuse policies and guidance, and a survey sent out to all 131 UK universities.

The review found that only 9 out of 133 UK universities had a specific domestic abuse policy. A further 18 had a combined policy that covered domestic abuse alongside other related issues (e.g., sexual violence and harassment, and gender-based violence). Of the remaining universities, domestic abuse was mentioned to some extent in more general safeguarding policy (27 universities). However, two-thirds of these only briefly mentioned domestic abuse. For example, listing 'domestic abuse' as a type of abuse, with no further information or definition. The policies that did provide guidance for male and LGBTQ+\* victims were otherwise not inclusive and failed to consider the cultural or ethnic diversity of staff and students, those with international status, or with disabilities.

\* LGBTQ is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer

Based on these findings, the review made the following recommendations:

- Universities should aim to develop specific and inclusive domestic abuse policies that are separate from broader safeguarding policies and that consider the diversity of their staff and students.
- Domestic abuse policies should provide information on how to respond effectively to perpetrators.
- Domestic abuse policies should be subject to annual reviews.
- Contact details of designated 'Champions' to whom reports of domestic abuse can be made should be stated clearly (in all policy and guidance).
- It should be compulsory for Champions to receive specialist domestic abuse training. This training should also be optional for all staff and students.

Domestic abuse is a major problem that affects people from all walks of life, including those working and studying at UK universities. The safeguarding response from universities has, in the main and to date, been slow and unsystematic. This is despite the clear legal, moral, and financial impetus for universities to develop domestic abuse policy, to reduce the devastating impact on staff and students at their place of work or study.<sup>4</sup>

### **Domestic abuse policy guidance for UK universities**

This policy guidance was funded by Research England (QR-SPF). Dr Roxanne Khan, Director of HARM, was Research Lead and is author of this report. This report was produced in consultation with a multidisciplinary Expert Advisory Panel internationally renowned for their work to raise awareness of, and to combat domestic abuse in its many forms (see Appendix 1 for full biographies).

This evidence-based guidance was written to support university policymakers, enabling them to feel confident, motivated, and empowered to develop competent, pragmatic, and inclusive domestic abuse policies. The report contains 5 main sections:

1. Domestic abuse: overview
2. Policy business case
3. Policy considerations
4. Developing domestic abuse policy
5. Making it work

It is vital that universities acknowledge that domestic abuse is not a problem that only happens 'behind closed doors'. Universities are in a fortunate position to have in their grasp this opportunity to support staff and students by developing policy and, in so doing, enhance their reputation and business operations.

Domestic Abuse Policies and  
Guidance across UK Universities

58.8%  
NO SPECIFIC DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

# Universities



The number of  
universities with  
combined policy

Universities  
with  
comprehensive  
domestic abuse  
guidance: 9 /  
133

**47%**

UNIVERSITIES  
HAVE BASIC  
DOMESTIC  
ABUSE  
GUIDANCE



# INTRODUCTION

---

## Domestic abuse policy guidance for UK universities

In 2020, Universities UK published two significant briefings relevant to the higher education (HE) sector. Called *Beginning the Conversation*<sup>5</sup> and *Continuing the Conversation*,<sup>6</sup> these briefings were the first to address national concerns about the impact of lockdown on domestic abuse victims within the context of the HE sector.\* Drawing on the expertise of academics and specialist organisations, both briefings highlighted that the lockdown measures in place to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) could increase the risk of domestic abuse for staff and students. Building upon these briefings, this guidance presents a comprehensive ‘how to’ guide to help university policymakers develop robust domestic abuse policies for staff and students.

If there is any question about the need for this policy guidance, consider the context of the problem. Domestic abuse is a significant public health concern that has reached epidemic levels – it is estimated that around 4.8 million women and 2.2 million men have suffered domestic abuse in the UK.<sup>7</sup> Domestic abuse takes many forms and, although it is mostly committed ‘behind closed doors’ by intimate partners and family members, it affects every aspect of victims’ lives, including their work and studies. The impact of domestic abuse on victims is often chronic, devastating, and may be life-threatening.

Domestic abuse must also be addressed in the context of lockdown, which has seen a sharp increase in reported cases, particularly against women and girls. Although COVID-19 restrictions are not the cause of domestic abuse, they have escalated instances of abuse while decreasing opportunities and routes for victims to escape to safety.<sup>8</sup> Within the first three-weeks of lockdown, the number of domestic killings doubled from the previous year<sup>9</sup> - at least 14 women, 1 man, and 2 children were murdered. In nearly all cases, the victims were killed by male relatives and most took place in a domestic setting. The Femicide Census,<sup>10</sup> which records the rates of fatal violence against women in the England and Wales, noted that rates have remained constant over the last decade; a woman has been killed by a man who is a current or former partner, on average once every 4-days over that 10-year period.

These figures make a compelling case for university policymakers across the UK to prioritise domestic abuse policy, especially as this a problem for many staff and students.<sup>11</sup>

\*Prior to the pandemic, Universities UK also published *Changing the Culture* (2016) which outlined ways that HEIs should tackle violence against women, harassment, and hate crime affecting students.

It is also important that universities develop policy that responds to the impact of COVID-19 in terms of the accelerated trend in remote working and learning. The pandemic has changed the way that higher education functions, affecting the way universities can support staff and student victims of domestic abuse who are working or learning remotely and online.<sup>12</sup> This policy guidance responds to a recent investigation which found that despite the domestic abuse epidemic, prior to and during COVID-19 lockdown, many universities in the UK do not have specific domestic abuse policies in place to support staff and students - whether on-campus or remote working or studying, using online digital spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, where policies do exist, many are not fully inclusive, and fail to consider the cultural and ethnic diversity of staff and students, including those with an international status, or people with disabilities. This is despite declarations made by many universities to promote the fair treatment of staff and students, regardless of their age, sex, gender, gender identity, disability, socioeconomic background, culture, ethnicity, faith, religious belief, nationality, sexual orientation, marital or transgender status.

This domestic abuse policy guidance offers a solution to a common problem faced by many universities – that is, support for Human Resources and student welfare teams that wish to develop safeguarding policy, yet are constrained by time, resources, and expertise.

This policy guidance has five main sections. Following this introduction is a detailed overview of domestic abuse relevant to policymakers in university settings. This is followed by a compelling business case for developing domestic abuse policy, and an outline of key considerations. Next is a detailed step-by-step guide for policymakers on how to develop bespoke policy that responds to the needs of staff and students at their own institution, followed by a section on 'how to make it work'.

Working through this guidance, section-by-section, will enable policymakers to develop competent and inclusive policies, to support an on-campus and online environment that responds thoughtfully, pragmatically and effectively to all forms of domestic abuse.

This can only be achieved if policies are developed, and implemented, in a way that is mindful of the diversity of staff and students at UK universities who are victims of domestic abuse, and does not further harm or stigmatise them, their beliefs, families, and communities.



We all have a role to play in preventing and responding to domestic abuse, in order to ensure a truly holistic, coordinated and effective response to this horrific crime. This includes educational settings and universities, which is why I warmly welcome this guidance.

I call upon all universities to use this guidance as a tool to either start or continue important conversations on domestic abuse and work to develop robust policies that will provide support and keep staff and students safe.

Nicole Jacobs  
Designate Domestic Abuse  
Commissioner, England and  
Wales

# 1. DOMESTIC ABUSE: OVERVIEW

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The personal cost of domestic abuse can be devastating - it can tear victim's lives apart.

Section 1 provides a detailed overview of domestic abuse, pertinent to the development of university policy. To ensure that policy is competent, pragmatic, and inclusive, it is critical that university policymakers understand key facts about domestic abuse in order to raise awareness and to dispel common myths. An improved understanding will lead to better safeguarding measures and opportunities for victims to seek help safely.

This section opens with a definition of domestic abuse, followed by an outline of the many forms domestic abuse may take. This is followed by estimated prevalence rates of domestic abuse at UK universities and the significant and wide-ranging impact it has on victims. This section also highlights the complex barriers that victims face in speaking about their experiences and how this can impact on their ability to seek help. Section 1 ends by explaining how victims can be supported within a university context, and how to respond appropriately to an abuser.

It is important for policymakers to note, when reading through this overview, that because domestic abuse is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men, it is recognised as a gendered crime. Women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse, different types of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, 'honour' based abuse) and sexual violence - which is interconnected with domestic abuse.

It is also important to note that, while any woman can experience domestic abuse, regardless of her ethnic heritage, religious group, sexuality, socioeconomic status, or disability, some women face additional forms of discrimination or oppression that increase the barriers they face in disclosing abuse and seeking help.



## 1.1. What is domestic abuse?

Much has been learned about domestic abuse over the last two decades. There is more knowledge available on domestic abuse now than there ever has been, making it easier to address in terms of university policy.

Conversely, there are also common myths and false beliefs about domestic abuse that have persisted for many years. Myths about domestic abuse persist because they offer easy and more palatable explanations for people's abusive behaviour towards victims. They cast victims, their circumstances, and the people who abuse them in simplistic terms. These myths may lead to victim-blaming because they overlook the fact that people do not, or cannot, always act as they feel or as others might expect them to. It is important that these myths are not perpetuated in domestic abuse policy, as they can become a barrier to victims' seeking help. Barriers to help-seeking are extremely powerful and are discussed in detail in section 1.5.

False beliefs can lead to misinterpretation of an abuser's motivations and actions, or a victim's reactions and needs, which may trigger inappropriate responses from people outside of that relationship, including those in a position to help. It is important to note that abusers may be manipulative and deceitful, telling lies to conceal their harmful behaviour and to avoid others seeing how they behave towards the victim(s).<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, university policymakers have a duty of care to understand the key dynamics of domestic abuse, as this will enable them to develop thoughtful, pragmatic, and inclusive policy.

The Crown Prosecution Service<sup>14</sup> have provided this definition of domestic abuse:

“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 regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” This definition includes so-called 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Central to the definition of domestic abuse is that a victim and the person who is abusing them have a personal relationship. People who are 'personally connected' include:

- Intimate partners
- Ex-partners
- Family members
- Individuals who share parental responsibility for a child

There is no requirement for a victim and the person who is abusing them to live in the same household. Not all abuse is overt; the close victim-abuser relationship can obscure the abuse taking place, making it difficult for a victim themselves or people outside of that relationship to identify, which is another barrier to help-seeking.

Some of the information covered on the following pages may be unfamiliar, unexpected, or uncomfortable. While some forms of abusive behaviour might be easier to perceive as harmful, all forms of domestic abuse are detrimental and need to be addressed. For this reason, the following section outlines the most common forms of domestic abuse, the impact they may have on victims, and why they must be addressed at university policy level.



Disabled staff/students

**2 X MORE**

likely to experience domestic abuse



Universities can play a pivotal role in ending violence against women and girls. As learning institutions, employers and accommodation providers, they have a responsibility to ensure that the women living, working and studying in their environments can do so in safety. As hubs of culture and drivers of knowledge and social change they also have a unique responsibility to challenge the sexism, misogyny, racism and other forms of structural inequality that continue to fuel domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls.

Farah Nazeer, CEO,  
Women's Aid

## 1.2. Forms of domestic abuse

The UK government's definition of domestic abuse recognises many forms, including, but not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Economic or financial abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Stalking
- Digital and online abuse
- 'Honour'-based abuse (including forced marriage) and FGM
- Spiritual abuse
- Pet abuse

To develop thoughtful, pragmatic, and inclusive safeguarding policy, it is important that policymakers recognise that universities are demographically diverse. This is illustrated by The Hotcourses Diversity Index\* that shows in 2021, the university at the top of the index had 170 student nationalities and a total of 8,582 international students. The university at the bottom of the index had a total of 20 student nationalities, and a total of 33 international students. Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data<sup>15</sup> shows the broad mix of staff and students at universities in the UK, in terms of their age, sex, gender, gender identity, disability, socioeconomic background, culture, ethnicity, faith, religious belief, nationality, sexual orientation, marital and transgender status.

This information must inform university approaches to domestic abuse policy development. Domestic abuse is a global problem that can affect anyone regardless of their personal attributes and beliefs. Victims can be of any age or socioeconomic background, single or in a relationship, and while some types of abuse are commonly associated with traditional beliefs or harmful practices, the reality is that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse in any of its forms.

It is also important to recognise that females are far more likely to be victimised and suffer serious injury, and so to be effective, policy must be considered as part of wider strategy to tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) that acknowledges the strong link between domestic abuse and sexual violence.

University policy must reflect this knowledge while also recognising that victims and abusers can be colleagues, employees, managers, or students from all walks of life. It is crucial to develop policy that acknowledges and respects diversity, to prevent further harm to victims by stigmatising their beliefs, families, or wider communities. A brief summary of some the most common forms of domestic abuse, pertinent to UK university policymakers, are now outlined.

\* Hotcourses Diversity Index – [click here to access](#)

- **Physical abuse** (violence). This can include hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, choking, use of weapons, and threats of violence.
- **Sexual abuse** (violence). 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'.<sup>16</sup>
- **Economic or financial abuse**. This is often an element of coercive behaviour, that 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 damage 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 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 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 aged 18 to 45 years reported that 15% had their intimate pictures shared without consent, and 10% admitted to sharing an intimate image. Overwhelmingly, women were victims. Threats were made by ex-partners (40%), friends (18%) and family members (11%).<sup>17</sup>

- **‘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 in the UK are typically young South Asian or Middle Eastern females, victims are not confined to one ethnic group, age or gender. For example, lesser acknowledged are victims from other minoritised and/or marginalised populations in the UK, including females of Mediterranean, Turkish heritage or of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities, or gay males.<sup>18</sup> Approximately one-fifth of cases reported to the Home Office’s Forced Marriage Unit (2018)<sup>19</sup> involve males. Although female genital mutilation (FGM) victims 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 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).
- **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>20</sup> Often used as a means of controlling victims, over 95% of professionals stated that some survivors would not leave home knowing their pet was unsafe.

COVID-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on victims of all these forms of domestic abuse. NHS figures show that hospital admissions for women with domestic abuse injuries increased during lockdown.<sup>21</sup> Many university staff and students have been forced to work and study in a worst-case scenario, whereby people already experiencing domestic abuse are also at increased risk of self-harm and suicide. The frequency of domestic abuse, self-harm, and thoughts of suicide are higher for women, Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups, and people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, disability, and COVID-19 diagnosis.<sup>22</sup>

Section 1.3 outlines the prevalence of domestic abuse at UK universities.



**10.5%**

of full-time  
female  
students  
experienced  
domestic abuse  
last year

## 1.3. How prevalent is domestic abuse at UK universities?

Research by HARM network found that 23,760 UK university staff and 162,073 students experience domestic abuse every year. That is 185,833\* people who may potentially benefit from effective university domestic abuse policy.

These numbers may seem high, but how do they compare to the UK population generally?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported, that between April and June 2020, approximately one-fifth of all offences recorded by the police were flagged as domestic abuse-related.<sup>2</sup>

In a pattern that is reflected across time and multiple national surveys, women were more likely to be victims of each type of abuse, specifically: any domestic abuse; non-sexual partner or family abuse; stalking by a partner or family member; sexual assault by a partner or family member.<sup>23</sup> From a total of 60,000 domestic abuse incidents recorded by police in Scotland, four in every five involved a female victim (and male accused), while 16% involved a male victim (and female accused).<sup>24</sup> In terms of age, crime survey data showed that women aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than any other age group.<sup>23</sup>

Given the high prevalence of domestic abuse across the UK generally, it would be easy to assume that universities simply reflect this wider societal trend. This is not the case. In fact, full-time students (7.7%) are the most likely to experience domestic abuse compared to any other occupation. Again, female students (10.5%) were more than twice as likely than male students (4.8%) to be a victim.<sup>23</sup> In the case of university staff, domestic abuse prevalence (5.4%) is in line with the general population in occupational terms, as are both staff and students with disabilities, who are over twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as those without – with disabled women almost twice as likely as disabled men.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that people's experiences of domestic abuse are generally underreported. This, in part, stems from an abuser's efforts to conceal the harm they are inflicting on victims. For example, the abuser may try to control the victim by undermining and manipulating them, distorting their words and actions, wearing them down so they are forced to watch what they say and do, and second-guess their own judgments. This makes it difficult for victims to understand, accept, think or speak about their experience to others.

\*See Appendix 2 for calculation method



It is also common for victims to try and rationalise the irrational behaviour of the person abusing them, which may lead them to blaming themselves, minimising the impact it is having on them, or justifying why it is happening to them.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that a significant proportion of victims do not report the abuse they are experiencing, and that actual rates are expected to be greater than those recorded by official statistics.

The issue of underreporting among marginalised staff and student groups (e.g., victims who are of minoritised ethnic heritage, disabled, and/or LGBTQ+) is often rooted in structural inequalities, which give rise to additional, intersecting hurdles to help-seeking in these communities. For example, domestic abuse is widely underreported within the LGBTQ+ community. A study of 5,000 people in the LGBTQ+ community across England, Scotland, and Wales found that, in one year, 17% (one in six people) aged 18 to 27 years suffered domestic abuse from a partner, and that Black, Asian, and other minoritised ethnic LGBTQ+ people (17%) were more likely than White LGBTQ+ people (11%) to suffer domestic abuse from a partner. One in seven (15%) of LGBTQ+ disabled people suffered domestic abuse in the last year.<sup>25</sup>

Considered alongside staff and student diversity data, the devastating impact on victims (see section 1.4), the many barriers to help-seeking (see section 1.5), and compelling legal, moral and business drivers (see section 2), the case for effective, inclusive domestic abuse policy is clear.

## 1.4. Impact on victims

The personal cost of domestic abuse can be devastating. The impact can be wide reaching, consuming people close to the victim including their friends and non-abusive family members. The harm caused by domestic abuse has many layers. It can be physical, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social; the effects usually overlap and interconnect. The effects are often overwhelming and victims report adopting coping strategies to survive the abuse as well as to minimise the risk of others being harmed, such as children and other family members. Unsurprisingly, domestic abuse will affect staff and student's ability to function at university, having a detrimental impact on their work and studies.

The impact may be immediate, as a direct result of physical injury, or indirectly and over a long period of time, as a result of coercion, control, and stress. The effects of domestic abuse are often long-term and are associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological and emotional health disturbance, including hopelessness, anxiety, depression, shame, anger, sleep disruption, and self-harm. Risk of suicide is also a serious concern. A UK study of 3,500 domestic abuse victims found that 24% had felt suicidal and that 18% had made plans to end their lives.<sup>26</sup> It is estimated that around one-third of female suicides in England and Wales were women who had experienced domestic abuse.<sup>27</sup> The risk of suicide may be greater for abused females from ethnic minorities – it is estimated that as many as half of all South Asian women in the UK who have attempted suicide have also been a victim of domestic abuse.<sup>28</sup>

A study of 6,818 female students in America, aged around 25 years, found that one-third had experienced domestic abuse from a partner, and this was associated with PTSD, depression, and academic disengagement.<sup>29</sup> The spiral effect of domestic abuse is illustrated in a study of 84,734 undergraduate students aged 18 to 24 from over 128 universities who suffered partner abuse in the past year – they were more likely to report the following obstacles to their academic performance: physical assault, sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, depression, disordered eating, financial problems, anxiety, sleep problems, chronic health problems, drug use, injury, and alcohol use.<sup>30</sup>

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (2018) showed that a quarter of partner abuse victims reported that they sustained some sort of physical injury.<sup>31</sup> This included minor injuries (bruising, a black eye, scratches) as well as serious injuries (severe bruising or bleeding from cuts), internal injuries or broken bones/teeth or other physical injuries (including poisoning).

The burden of surviving and concealing the harm inflicted by an abuser will weigh heavily on victims, who may find the cost of escaping is higher than the cost of staying. One common false belief is that if the abuse was that bad or painful, a victim would report the abuser(s) or run away. Section 1.5 explains that these false beliefs are unhelpful and need to be dispelled because they act as a barrier and may prevent victims' from seeking help.



# 162,000+

**University students**  
experience domestic abuse every year

## 1.5. Barriers to disclosing abuse

Victims of domestic abuse face barriers that may prevent them speaking out about the abuse they are suffering. It is vital that policymakers understand the power of these barriers, as they explain why many victims struggle to escape an abusive relationship, even when they (or other family members) have endured abuse over a long period of time and may have suffered ongoing or serious injury. Here are some examples of internal and external barriers:

### Internal barriers

- Fear of not being believed, or being blamed
- Embarrassment, shame
- Self-blame and guilt
- Fear of ‘dishonouring’ family
- Protect partner/relationship
- Fear abuse may escalate
- Fear of losing children, home
- Being unaware of options or available resources
- Fear of losing job/failing course, or impact on career/studies
- Concerns about confidentiality or privacy if disclosing at place of work/study

### External barriers

- Abuser’s physical presence or controlling behaviour
- Abuser’s manipulation of professionals
- Lack of money/financial support
- Social isolation
- Cultural and societal norms
- Putting friends/family at risk or upsetting them
- Public perceptions and victim-blaming attitudes
- Unable to access domestic abuse policies or guidelines at place of work/study

Internal barriers relate to common fears, beliefs, and attitudes that victims themselves may have. External barriers relate to other people's beliefs about domestic abuse, lack of specialist support (policies and procedures), and societal and cultural norms.

Studies show that victims may not disclose their abuse to formal sources of support, due to issues of trust, feelings of shame and embarrassment, a fear of how others will react, a lack of understanding, or the belief that it is a private matter. Men are less willing than women to disclose their abuse, as are people of lower socioeconomic status and those from minoritised groups.<sup>32,33</sup>

For example, data analysis of 42,000 cases by national domestic abuse charity SafeLives found that before seeking help, victims of Black, Asian, and other minoritised ethnicities suffered abuse up to 1.5 time longer, compared to White British or Irish victims.<sup>34</sup>

In a university context, it is important to note that the barriers staff and students face may vary, depending on a victim's age, sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or religion. International students may face external barriers such as not being able to disclose abuse in their first language. Black and Asian victims are most likely to face additional barriers related to cultural, religious or other stereotypes. For example, a gay Muslim male student may face external barriers such as cultural norms, racial or religious stereotypes. He may also face internal barriers such as fear of bringing shame on his family or fear that the harm may escalate.<sup>18</sup>

As domestic abuse takes many forms and can affect victims in different ways, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to policy development is likely to be ineffective. The following section therefore considers the importance of supporting university staff and students who are victims of domestic abuse, in a way that is bespoke, inclusive and respects the diversity.



Domestic violence is often a hidden crime which can ruin lives. This new guidance will help universities to tackle it more effectively and systematically, helping students and staff who are experiencing abuse and reassuring them that they can find safety, support and compassion from their university.

Amy Norton, ED&I Lead,  
Office for Students

## 1.6. Supporting a victim

As domestic abuse is often thought of as a private matter, to be dealt with ‘behind closed doors’, it is important that adequate measures are in place to support domestic abuse victims in a university setting. This section considers two key themes:

1. Interpersonal response: How a victim can be supported by professionals in a university setting, when they disclose their experiences.
2. University systems: How a victim is supported by university-wide policy and programmes.

### Interpersonal response

Without training, professionals may feel unprepared to approach the issue of domestic abuse sensitively or effectively. It is therefore important to provide staff training, as adequate support plays a vital role in improving a victim’s immediate and long-term safety, as well as their physical and mental health. The previous section outlined barriers that victims might face in disclosing their experiences and seeking help. Disclosures of domestic abuse are never made lightly and will be extremely stressful and emotional for a victim. Speaking about, leaving, or escaping an abusive relationship takes enormous courage. Domestic abuse victims have limited opportunities to seek support; they are often isolated and may have small social networks, due to the coercive tactics used by abusers and the shame and embarrassment that victims feel. Therefore, when university staff and students indicate that they are a victim of abuse, it is important that they are believed, and the disclosure viewed as a red-flag. Professionals must recognise that a disclosure might be the ‘one chance’ to help and follow the ‘one chance rule’ - a potential life-saver for victims.<sup>12</sup>

It is important that professionals in a university setting do not judge or typecast a person seeking help or advice. Personal opinions about victims are often based on common myths, which may prevent victims seeking support. Common domestic abuse myths and attitudes include:

- If they are being abused, they could just leave.
- They should toughen up. If my partner had hit me, I would hit them back.
- It isn’t right for outsiders to intervene because that sort of thing is part of their culture/lifestyle. If we try to help, people may think we’re racist / homophobic.
- I can’t believe they would be abusive or violent! They are so popular and funny, and their family is respectable.
- How bad can it be if they keep going back? They have only been dating for a few months so it would be easy to walk away, if they really wanted to.

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to supporting victims - each victim, 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.<sup>35</sup> It is important, therefore, that if any staff member 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

## University systems

A range of initiatives can be used to support victims in a university setting. A national workplace guidance recommended the following measures: general awareness training, poster campaigns, a zero-tolerance approach in staff contacts and student charters, and anonymous ways to communicate concerns. It was also recommended that appointed domestic abuse Champions should receive training from recognised specialist domestic abuse services.<sup>12</sup> It should be clear that the Champion is the dedicated point of contact for domestic abuse issues within the university (with clarity about the scope and limits of confidentiality) and that they are allocated time, resources, and private space so people can speak with them openly, make phone calls, research online in privacy and safety. To be effective, it is important that these systems are inclusive with respect to the diversity of university staff and students. An example of a culturally and gender inclusive digital poster campaign, for staff and students, is shown in Appendix 3. Awareness campaigns should aim to challenge sexism, racism, misogyny, ableism, and other inequalities that drive abuse.

Policymakers should refer to the UK government’s 2021 report on how organisations can support victims of domestic abuse.<sup>36</sup> This highlights the importance of domestic abuse policy, paid leave, awareness raising and training initiatives (including specialist training of Champions). Also important are perpetrator policies and initiatives, which are discussed in more detailed in the following section.

## 1.7. Responding to an abuser

It is vital that universities respond appropriately to an alleged abuser. Domestic abuse policy must cover effective responses to reports that either a staff member, student, or someone outside of the university is an alleged abuser. The person may hold a senior role in a university, they may be a colleague or student with a reputation or manner that seems at odds with the accusation. Perhaps they are known for being intimidating, or they may be someone entirely unknown but do not appear fit into the mould of ‘an abuser’.

Sections 1.5 and 1.6 emphasised that the moment someone discloses that they are a victim of domestic abuse, the risk of further harm against them escalates; that such a disclosure must be seen as a ‘red-flag’ that requires a one-chance-rule response. It is also important to note that an abuser may retaliate, intimidate, manipulate, or aggress against their victim’s formal and informal support network at university (friends, relatives, flatmates, colleagues, welfare staff), placing them at risk of harm as secondary victims.<sup>37</sup> This shows why it is necessary to have competent, pragmatic, and inclusive domestic abuse policy in place, so that universities can respond appropriately and manage these situations quickly and effectively.\*

From the outset, adopting an open and public zero-tolerance stance on domestic abuse should be a priority. A zero-tolerance statement must be clearly visible on a university home page, be imbedded in employee and student manuals, and in a statement of expectation in contract terms. Staff and students should be aware that domestic abuse, inside and outside of the university, will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action. There should be a clear commitment to supporting victims and challenging abusers, by recognising that domestic abuse is the abuser’s choice and responsibility. However, it may also be appropriate to support staff and students seeking help to address their abusive behaviour.<sup>38</sup>

\*See University of Strathclyde [staff](#) and [student](#) policy (page 8-10) as an example of good practice.



## 2. POLICY BUSINESS CASE

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In England and Wales, the annual cost to organisations of domestic abuse (resulting from lost output, due to time off work and reduced productivity) was £14 billion<sup>36</sup>

Section 2 presents a compelling business case for universities to develop domestic abuse policy. This case is based on robust evidence that the cost of assisting staff and students to deal with the impact of domestic abuse far outweighs the cost of not doing so.

The previous section outlined the devastating costs of domestic abuse on victims. These provide clear moral and legal drivers for developing domestic abuse policy for university staff and students. Policymakers also need to understand the high financial costs of domestic abuse on university operations and reputation and why developing competent and effective university policy in response to this must be a priority.

Domestic abuse is damaging to the whole economy, affecting victims as well as the wider society. Domestic abuse is costly for universities in terms of time and productivity, when staff and students are forced to deal with the impact of the abuse they are suffering (e.g., time spent seeking medical, legal, or housing support, and/or counselling, community, welfare, refuge, and emergency services).<sup>38</sup>

Section 1.4 outlined the impact of domestic abuse on students' academic performance. Staff also report that they struggle to work, and that this impacts on their career progression. For example, a large-scale study found that around 21% of respondents in the UK who were victims of domestic abuse had sometimes stopped going to work and/or would take days off; it was estimated that 122,000 employed women had taken time off work because of domestic abuse in the last 12 months.<sup>39</sup>

The study reported the following ways in which domestic abuse may have affected victims' work performance:

- 30% I was distracted and found it hard to concentrate at work.
- 23% I couldn't fulfil my potential.
- 21% I was less productive.
- 15% I was injured and as a result, I couldn't perform well at work.
- 14% I couldn't perform as well as I could before the abuse started.
- 12% My work decreased in quality.
- 5% I had more work-related accidents/made more general mistakes.

Four main types of business costs, relevant to UK universities, have been identified:<sup>38,39</sup>

1. Absenteeism: the cost of staff taking additional days leave due to domestic abuse, arriving late to work or leaving early and changes in shift patterns.
2. Staff turnover: the cost of staff leaving their jobs (either voluntarily or involuntarily) and the cost of recruiting and training replacement employees.
3. Presenteeism: for example, when staff may be unable concentrate, there may be loss of productivity, quality outputs or increased risk of accidents at work.
4. Negative consequences for the organisation: including internal costs of employees being witness to violence and the external reputation cost.

Another cost is the impact on fellow staff or students, who see their colleague or friend upset or injured, or when the abuser(s) also works or studies at the same university (or lives in the same halls of residence), creating a health and safety issue.<sup>37-39</sup> Addressing domestic abuse perpetrators is a crucial factor in policy development, as these staff or students can bring violence directly into the university. A large-scale study of 3,423 people by the Trade Union Congress found that over 1 in 10 domestic abuse victims reported that the violence continued in the workplace.<sup>40</sup> The National Domestic Violence Hotline in America reported that 96% of employed domestic abuse victims suffer problems at work because of the abuse, 2 in 5 were afraid of an unexpected visit by their abuser, and that around one-third of women killed in the workplace between 2003 and 2008 were current or former intimate partners. Despite this, over 70% of workplaces in the US do not have formal domestic abuse policy.<sup>41</sup>

The foundation of this business case rests on the fact that the cost of developing, implementing, and evaluating domestic abuse policy is far less than the cost involved in not doing so. And that, ultimately, the huge costs of domestic abuse means that policy intervention can be seen as worthwhile in basic 'value-for-money terms'.<sup>42</sup>

# 2.3 Million

People experienced  
domestic abuse  
12 months to March 2020

Domestic abuse  
It's YOUR business

Annual  
cost to  
society: **£66  
Billion**



Victims who report  
impact on career  
progression

**£14**

**BILLION**

Annual cost to organisations

### 3. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

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- Universities have a responsibility to support all victims of domestic abuse – both female and male victims. It is, however, important to understand that domestic abuse is a gendered crime that forms part of wider violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- University domestic abuse policy must address intersecting structural inequalities and associated barriers to accessing support. For example, policies that do not acknowledge diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture, and language make it more difficult for victims from ethnic minorities or with international status to seek and receive help, compounding their risk of abuse.
- University strategies to tackle domestic abuse need to address the root causes of sexism and misogyny, as well as other social inequalities, such as racism and ableism, that shape victims' experiences of abuse and their access to support.
- Carefully consider the language used in policy documents. Use terms thoughtfully and meaningfully, e.g., use single quotation marks when writing 'honour'-based abuse; refer to ethnicity (not 'race') and ethnic minorities (not 'BAME'). Likewise, do not refer to a relationship in which one person is being abused by another as a 'difficult' or 'unhappy' relationship – this reframes and minimises the abuse and this makes the victim responsible for the harm being inflicted on them.
- Calibrate university websites to direct searches on 'domestic abuse' and related terms directly to reporting and support information, rather than staff in the university with academic expertise in the area.
- Consider what happens if a perpetrator is in-training to be, or already in, a regulated role? e.g., medical, social work, teaching or nursing.
- Policy discretion. For every policy rule, there is usually an exception. We cover more on this in Section 5. 'Making it work'.

## 4. DEVELOPING DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

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Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Nicole Jacobs, when speaking at the 2021 Universities UK Conference, highlighted that while the Domestic Abuse Bill does not specifically mention universities, the statutory guidance applies to universities - this stipulates that universities have a duty of care to safeguard victims. Designate Commissioner Jacobs stressed that the Domestic Abuse Bill provides an opportunity for universities to reassess their safeguarding procedures and question whether they are doing enough to protect their staff and students.

The information provided in sections 1 to 3 makes clear that developing specific and evidence-based domestic abuse policy should not only be an integral part of every university safeguarding strategy, but that it should be a priority. In practical terms, Human Resources and student welfare teams that wish to develop domestic abuse policy, are most likely constrained by time, resources, and expertise. To overcome these potential hurdles, section 4 responds by presenting a step-by-step guide to support policymakers in developing bespoke domestic abuse policy for university staff and students. Following these guidelines will enable university policymakers to design policy content that is relevant, competent, inclusive and effective.

Before working through section 4, it is critical that policymakers read through sections 1 to 3, as this provides an overview of domestic abuse pertinent to the development of university policy. Section 1 is designed to increase awareness and understanding of domestic abuse by providing an overview of the problem, section 2 presents a robust business case for developing domestic abuse policy, and section 3 highlights additional considerations.

Section 4 outlines the following eight key sections that a university policy document should include: (1) heading, (2) policy statement, (3) table of contents, (4) policy introduction, (5) policy purpose and scope, (6) duties, roles and responsibilities, (7) policy provisions, and (8) appendix.

Following that is a section on 'making it work' – this details pragmatic ways to ensure the policy is effective in practice.

## 4.1. Policy heading

The policy document should be clearly labelled and include the name of the university, for example 'X University policy on domestic abuse'.

Does the policy cover staff, students, or staff and students? This should be explained in a subheading.

On the policy heading page, detail where applicable associated documents, approving body, the name of the document owner and/or policy manager (job title only), effective dates from/to, the review cycle, version date/number, and policy reference number.

Include information about the availability of alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, audio, languages other than English, plus details about how and where to obtain these.

## 4.2. Policy statement

The purpose of this policy statement is two-fold. Firstly, the statement should make clear that victims (or those at risk of domestic abuse) can seek guidance about domestic abuse at the university; they can ask for advice, disclose their own experiences, and raise concerns. Secondly, the statement should make clear that victims can be assured of appropriate confidentiality if they disclose experiences of domestic abuse, and that they have control over decisions that affect them, and safety measures that are put in place.

Recommended themes to include in the statement are as follows:

- **Purpose:** e.g., In line with X University's core values, this policy demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all staff and students. At its foundation, this policy promotes gender equality, dignity and respect, both on and off the campus. If a member of staff or student feels that they are at risk of harm or are a victim of abuse, they should feel confident to seek information, guidance or support from the university.
- **Scope:** Make clear which policy document is for staff and which policy document is for students, and who the policy specifically applies to. For example, does the policy apply to all staff (both academic and non-academic at any level)? Likewise, does the policy apply to all students (undergraduate, postgraduate, full- or part-time, international, main- and partner campuses)? Make clear that the university will support all victims of domestic abuse, both female and male victims (regardless of their age or background), and that the university understands domestic abuse as a gendered crime that forms part of wider violence against women and girls.
- **Zero-tolerance:** State clearly that the university adopts a zero-tolerance code of conduct towards perpetrators of abuse, or anyone assisting them.

End this section with a 'quick reference' synopsis that includes hyperlinks to key sections in the policy document, such as the list of support services in the appendix.

## 4.3. Table of contents

The policy document should have a numbered table of contents for easy access to information.

An example table of contents, is as follows:

1. Policy statement
2. Table of contents
3. Policy introduction
4. Policy purpose and scope
5. Duties, roles, and responsibilities
6. Policy provisions
7. Policy appendix (including a list of support services)

Information to be covered in each section is detailed on the following pages.



**23,000+**

**University staff  
experience domestic  
abuse every year**



## 4.4. Policy introduction

The introduction should provide an overview of domestic abuse in the university context. This information can be drawn from the information covered in section 1 of this guidance 'domestic abuse: overview', and should include the following:

- **Key points:** Acknowledge that domestic abuse is situated within the wider context of violence against women and girls; be clear that domestic abuse can be both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, as well as clearly acknowledging that people of all genders can be and are victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- **Definitions:** Outline the different forms that domestic abuse can take, such as physical, sexual, economic or financial abuse, coercive control, and stalking (as outlined in section 1.2). Draw attention to issues that may be more common for staff and students (e.g., commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography, and trafficking) and abuse by other family members (e.g., 'honour'-based abuse, forced marriage, sibling/child-to-parent violence).
- **Scope of the problem:** Include statistics on prevalence rates in relation to the HE sector and recognise the issue of non-reporting by victims, regardless of age or gender. Highlight that the support available is not dependent on disclosure or reporting to law enforcement.
- **Inclusivity:** Recognise intersectional issues and the role intersecting identities such as being Black, Asian or other minoritised ethnic heritage, disabled, and/or LGBTQ+ and the impact this may have on victims' experience of domestic abuse, the additional barriers they may face, and ability to access support at university.
- **Impact of domestic abuse:** Outline the detrimental impact of victim blame and acknowledge that the short- and long-term consequences of domestic abuse remains even after a person has ended/escaped an abusive relationship.
- **Signs and indicators:** Outline potential of signs of domestic abuse (see page 42) and the effect it may have on victims in a university context. This information might be presented in the appendices but should be referenced here.

**Work productivity/Academic engagement:**

- Receives high volume of emails, texts, phone calls from current/former partner or family member
- Upset or anxious in response to emails, texts, phone calls
- High absenteeism or persistently late without/unusual explanation
- Frequently anxious about leaving work/classes on time and going home
- 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
- 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

**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)

**Physical signs:**

- Fatigue or frequent/sudden/unexpected medical problems/sickness
- Repeated visible injuries (e.g., bruises) and implausible explanations
- Sudden change in dress or pattern of make up (e.g., excessive clothing in summer or seems unhappy/uncomfortable in a complete change in style) and/or unkept appearance
- Notable change in weight

The information contained in this introductory section should raise awareness of domestic abuse, to improve understanding and the scope of the problem. This information will also assist in formal record-making, which will be outlined in section 4.6. The introduction should end with a statement on behalf of the university (by name) on its own specific values and commitment to safeguarding and supporting the safety and welfare of all its staff and students, as well as its legal obligations.

## 4.5. Policy purpose and scope

This section of the policy document should detail the university's strategy for promoting wellbeing and safeguarding staff and students from domestic abuse, and the way in which the university will work with external agencies, such as the police and voluntary organisations, to do so.

The purpose and scope of the policy should detail the following:

- The university strategy for creating and communicating a framework and system for safe disclosure and reporting of domestic abuse. Include the scope and limits of confidentiality and where this might need to be breached.
- A programme of training for staff that is specific to domestic abuse and is not integrated into wider safeguarding training. This training must be informed by the expertise of domestic abuse/VAWG agencies within the university context specifically. It is recommended that the university engages with specialist local and national charities to ensure that training is evidence-based, victim-informed, and survivor-led.\*
- Signpost to, and build clear referral pathways to local specialist domestic abuse/VAWG services and wider services that are relevant to victims of domestic abuse (e.g., welfare benefit services, housing services, police, and national helplines). This should include specialist by-and-for services that meet the needs of female and male victims, as well as victims who are of minoritised ethnic heritage, have disabilities, and/or are LGBTQ+). State that the university recognises the need for, and will consider, as appropriate, longer-term support following disclosure (e.g., therapeutic or counselling support).
- Signpost to, and build clear referral pathways to specialist services for those concerned about their own abusive behaviour. Outline clear processes to ensure victims are safeguarded from further abuse where the abuser is a university staff member or student.
- Make a commitment to, and outline mechanisms for, university engagement with local strategic and multi-agency partnerships on domestic abuse, such as Community Safety Partnerships and Local Partnership Boards.
- Clear recognition throughout the policy on intersectional needs of different victims, especially those from marginalised groups. Recognition of specific barriers these victims might face in disclosing and seeking support, as well as the general barriers victims face.

\* Women's Aid provide an inclusive online directory to search A to Z of services: [click here to access](#).

- Delivery of culturally-competent educational programmes for staff and students on campus about domestic abuse and wider forms of gender-based violence. This should include education about consent, healthy relationships, and gender inequality, and should be developed and delivered in a way that draws upon the expertise of the domestic abuse/VAWG sector and addresses the specific university context.
- Acknowledgement that university staff and students may be experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse themselves, their family, or colleagues. Ensure that mechanisms for disclosing and seeking support are embedded into the university's employment policies, drawing upon the expertise of specialist organisations such as Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) in good employer practice.
- Clear commitment from the university that it will respect the decisions of the person reporting/disclosing domestic abuse about who to contact and who not to. Draft the policy centered around the victim, and the importance of supporting and reinforcing their personal agency as a key operating principle against which any policy may be tested.
- The policy is likely to direct individuals to both internal (i.e., university) and external sources of support, and regular review is required. A range of guidance should be available e.g., safeguarding, financial, counselling and should not be dependent on willingness to report to law enforcement.
- A clear framework for transparency and accountability of the policy, including mechanism and timeframes for regular review and evaluation, incorporating stakeholder feedback.



Over recent years some universities have made significant strides forward in addressing our problem with sexual violence. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) or domestic violence is increasingly being recognised as another expression of gender-based violence which needs our urgent attention if we are to live up to our institutional values. If we are successful in preventing and addressing such violence, we can save lives - what could be more important and urgent than that?

Professor Graham Towl,  
Durham University

## 4.6. Duties, roles, and responsibilities

This section should list all the people/groups and accountabilities in ensuring that staff and students are safeguarded within the university.

- For staff, this is likely to include line managers, Human Resources, and union representatives. As line managers play a critical role in recognising and responding to the situation, staff who are victims of domestic abuse should be encouraged to seek their guidance and support.
- For students, this may include academic or professional staff, Student Services (welfare and counselling staff), Estate Services (security and halls of residence staff), the Student Union and other student representatives/groups (LGBTQ+, disability, or international student networks).
- Name the university domestic abuse 'Champion'. Provide their contact details, state that they have received specialist domestic abuse training, and whether they are the main point of contact within the university for staff/students to seek advice about domestic abuse.
- Acknowledge that any member of university staff could be the recipient of a disclosure, and that the policy recognises this may be difficult for both the staff/student who has disclosed their abuse as well as the person who has been disclosed to.
- Include a clear statement about the scope and limits of confidentiality; that is, if all disclosures will be treated with confidentiality and whether there are any exceptions, such as legal obligations or potentially emergency situations when the victim/other is at serious risk of harm.
- Provide clear information on record-keeping. For example, that records will be made in agreement with, and led by, the staff/student who discloses abuse and that these records will be kept confidentially and securely, and only shared when essential. For example, records might be shared if the staff/student who discloses (or a third party) is at serious risk of harm, or they might be used by the police in criminal proceedings.
- State that an annual report will be routinely submitted to the university governing body or Human Resources, who will be accountable for progress in this area of policy.
- End with a statement of who is ultimately accountable for ensuring that staff/students are safeguarded within the university.

## 4.7. Policy provisions

This section of the policy document should detail provisions for staff/students should they wish to seek support or guidance about domestic abuse.

- Provide details on the provision of 'private spaces' (wheelchair accessible) where staff/students can be seen alone and can have confidential discussions without being seen or overheard to ensure that any reporting party feels safe, without fear or embarrassment, shame or stigmatisation. Ensure to include information on special support for remote workers/students (and online in digital spaces).
- Make clear that the first and foremost consideration should be to check on immediate safety, and that when staff/students disclose they are a victim of domestic abuse, the university-response will be led by the victim, in accordance with the scope and limits of confidentiality.
- Restate the named contact (domestic abuse 'Champion') and the provision for confidential guidance.
- Provide details of online information and support resources including the 'click to hide' function. Explain that when staff/students disclose they are a victim of domestic abuse, they will be asked how they would like to remain in contact (e.g., if there is a safe email/postal address and contact number).
- This section should include a statement of the university's commitment to provide support and assistance following such disclosure. Restate (or refer to relevant appendix) the university's zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse in all its forms, as well as the university disciplinary procedures.

## 4.8. Policy appendix

- Provide contact details and information on local, regional, and national support services, including emergency services.
- List support services for a range of abuse types (e.g., financial, sexual, psychological) and groups (e.g., female and male victims, as well as victims of minoritised ethnic heritage, are deaf, have disabilities, and/or are LGBTQ+).



Controlling or causing fear to someone you are supposed to care about is unacceptable. It is a misuse of that person's trust and wellbeing and puts multiple people in and around the situation at risk of harm. Universities, like all other locations in which we live, love and work, should be safe, happy places in which we can all be at our best. Let's end domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.

Suzanne Jacob, CEO,  
SafeLives



## 5. MAKING IT WORK

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### Committed implementers are a crucial factor for successful policy implementation<sup>43</sup>

The process of making a policy work begins at the development stage. Universities must adopt a participatory approach, by engaging stakeholders in the design of meaningful domestic abuse policy. For example, this could be a diverse and inclusive steering/focus group made up of representatives from staff, students, teaching, trade, and student unions, local and national support agencies, local authorities and GPs, policy managers and HR leads. While the final policy may ultimately not reflect all opinions, it is important that the representative voices of those who will be affected by the policy are heard.

Use clear and unambiguous language and terminology that can be easily understood by everyone. Use words such as "must" instead of "should" if something is a requirement rather than optional. The policy must be available in formats that are accessible to all, including those with visual impairments and those with English as a second language. It must be easily and safely accessible through the university website (including options to quickly and safely exit the page), as well as in hard copy format.

Domestic abuse policy must be embedded in the wider organisational frameworks and the processes of continuous improvement.

The policy must be cross-referenced in HR policies and linked to induction materials for all new staff and students. The policy must be considered in approaches to health and wellbeing, and equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **Training**

Ultimately, committed implementers will determine the level of success of policy implementation strategy. Although training is just one factor in successful policy implementation, its contribution is a major one. Training is a non-controversial solution to overcome implementation hurdles, and implementers are more likely to proceed if they feel confident in their ability to transform an intention (policy) into practice.<sup>44</sup> Put simply, implementers must be taught what they need to know to *do* policy. The university's commitment to quality domestic abuse training, especially when it is delivered by (or in partnership with) domestic abuse/VAWG organisations and specialist trainers, will play a crucial role in motivating implementers and equipping them with the knowledge they need to put the policy into practice.

Other factors such as workloads, interactions, and resources also influence frontline staff willingness to implement policy. As well as adequate training, universities must ensure that those tasked with implementing policy have sufficient time and resources available to them.

## **Discretion**

In policy terms, discretion can be described as the “extent of freedom a policy implementer can exercise in a specific context and the factors that give rise to this freedom in that context.”<sup>43</sup> Discretion-as-perceived, or ‘powerfulness’, is a prerequisite for high implementation willingness. Universities must move beyond the question of whether staff should be granted discretion: the answer is yes. Taking a bottom-up view of frontline staff as problem-solvers who crucially need the freedom to adapt the programme to local conditions, is pivotal to successful implementation. If people can use “that’s policy” in order to avoid a complex or awkward situation, then critical chances to assist a victim may be missed.

## **Dissemination**

Universities can enhance their reputation by promoting safeguarding policy and strategies to prospective and existing staff and students. For example, Durham University’s applicant numbers increased after open days covered their efforts to address sexual violence. Other dissemination approaches might include:

- Use intranet pages or communications to make staff and students aware of the policy and where a copy can be obtained. This can be particularly effective where content is translated into the main languages spoken by staff and students, and it includes internal contacts and signposts local and national domestic abuse support providers specialised in specific groups.
- Publish a press release and contact local media. Include a statement from the Vice Chancellor to demonstrate senior-level buy-in. This helps to raise awareness of the problem and plays an important role in changing the culture and breaking down barriers.
- An internal newsletter can be used to launch the policy. This should include a copy of the Vice Chancellor’s statement, details about forthcoming workshops and training events, relevant links, and where to find support.
- Organise a series of workshops to explain the policy. Invite expert speakers and survivors, present a case study, and include ways in which delegates can engage (e.g., polls, quizzes, Q&A).
- Host regular lunch and learn sessions to raise awareness. Invite speakers, including in-house researchers/lecturers, survivors, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA), and local charities.

- Establish a partnership with a local domestic abuse charity or run fundraising events to support their work.
- Poster (back of toilet doors, communal spaces, libraries, refectories) and leafleting campaigns will make staff and students aware of the policy and support available to them.
- Involve the Student Union, teaching unions, and trade unions. Ask them to share your events, newsletters, posters, leaflets and other signposting initiatives among their networks.
- A diverse group of domestic abuse ‘Champions’ will help to raise visibility of the issue and play a critical part in successful policy implementation. They must be trained to respond to abuse and refer individuals.
- Consider making the policy publicly available on the university website. This makes access easier for students and staff not connected to the university server. It also instills confidence in prospective staff and students that the university takes the issue seriously.

Finally, university programme and policy managers must ask the question: “How can we determine whether a policy or programme makes a difference?”. Which leads us to our final recommendation.

### **Programme evaluation**

The aim of a domestic abuse policy, including associated guidance and other related health communications (e.g., posters), is to change the behaviour of staff and students. The policy should reassure victims that if they seek help at the university or disclose their abuse, they will be believed and supported. It should inform staff and students about what to do in the event of disclosure. And it should reduce offending by abusers.

To answer the question of whether a policy or programme ‘makes a difference’, the university should conduct a programme evaluation. There are three primary types of evaluation that span the life of a programme: formative, process, and summative evaluation.

- Formative evaluation refers to activities undertaken during the design and pretesting of programmes to guide the design process.<sup>45</sup> This information helps programme planners to determine who is most affected by the problem; identify the needs of specific subgroups; ascertain existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes; determine levels of access to services, information, support and other resources; understand barriers to action, and determine communication habits and preferences.<sup>43-45</sup> This type of evaluation is usually conducted at programme development stage.

- Process evaluation – also known as implementation assessment – is used to track programme implementation and determine whether it has been implemented as designed. It is key to understanding programme dynamics such that successful components can be replicated, and ineffective elements eliminated in future efforts.
- Summative evaluation measures the extent to which change occurs, consistent with programme objectives. It answers the question: did the programme have impact? That is, did it ‘make a difference’? For example, in the case of policy, guidance or health communications, the programme may have enabled more staff/students to access specialist domestic abuse support services via signposting. This could be measured based on contact statistics or other call-logging data available from the service, or anonymous surveys among the target populations.

An evaluation strategy that focuses solely on planned outcomes is not sufficient to meet the needs of programme evaluators. To answer the question of how a programme works, evaluators must examine not only outcomes, but also processes and theory.

A holistic ‘programme of evaluation’ that involves external organisations or individuals (professional evaluators) and multiple stakeholders (internal), and occurs throughout the life of a programme, will provide a guideline for the programme evaluation process. Victims’ perspectives are pivotal to evaluation. A diverse group of staff and students must be meaningfully involved in assessing the extent to which the policy worked as well as informing recommendations. By engaging in this process, evaluators will develop an understanding of what works and what does not work, the relationships among programmes, and the operational context to guide the development of the programme.

Ultimately, the level of financial and human resources available will determine the level of methodological rigour applied to any evaluation. A cost-benefit evaluation during the formative and process evaluation stages may help programme managers to assess cost relative to effects.

Lastly, it is important to recognise that the links between planned and emergent theory, processes and outcomes are not linear. A planned process may lead to a planned outcome but can just as easily result in an emergent (unintended) outcome. Similarly, an emergent process may result in an emergent outcome, or by some previously undefined mechanism, the planned outcome as well. This underscores the importance of both articulating a planned theory, which allows for evaluation to be designed to test the causal relationships between planned processes and outcomes and seeking out emergent theory to explain what is occurring as the programme unfolds.<sup>43-45</sup>

Implementers must  
be taught what  
they need to know  
to *do* policy



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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The most important reason to develop a robust and inclusive domestic abuse policy is that it will help to “build a stronger, more equitable university culture.”

Domestic abuse is a problem that impacts on the physical, emotional and financial wellbeing of over 185,000 university staff and students in the UK every year. In the Executive Summary (p.8), we provide information from our review findings about the number of universities with domestic abuse policy; how inclusive these policies are; the level of training available to staff and students; and details about recording of incidents. Despite the enormity of the problem, and the devastating impact on the lives of victims, it appears that most UK universities have no specific policy on domestic abuse. Many offer little or no training, and the majority do not record incidents.

What this policy guidance hopes to achieve is a change in attitudes. Domestic abuse, despite the obvious connotation, is not something that happens at home ‘behind closed doors’. Rather, domestic abuse is a wide-ranging and devastating series of crimes that cause severe harm to victims and their loved ones, impacting negatively upon every workplace/place of study, as well as the wider society. Universities must take ownership of this problem in order to better support their staff and students who are experiencing this abuse.

A domestic abuse policy is the place to start. It defines the goals of the university and offers guidance to help achieve these goals. It provides staff and students with information about where they can turn for help, and the confidence to seek it. Domestic abuse policy assists the university in communicating its obligations to provide a safe workplace/place of study and how it will meet obligations imposed on the university by law. It provides accountability and transparency. Ultimately, the most important reason to develop a robust and inclusive domestic abuse policy is, in the words of Professor Julia Buckingham CBE, President, Universities UK, that it will help to “build a stronger, more equitable university culture.”

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In every university class and department, it is statistically likely that there will be one or more students/staff members being subjected to domestic abuse. It is also likely that there will be one or more perpetrators. Domestic abuse can happen on campus, where perpetrators may stalk, harass, monitor and psychologically abuse victims/survivors. Domestic abuse can be devastating; it can cause students to drop out of university or under-achieve in their degrees and can blight the careers of university employees. It is vital that universities step up to the challenge of domestic abuse and put robust policies in place for tackling it.

Dr Emma Katz, Liverpool Hope University



# Appendix 1. Expert Advisory Panel- Biographies

## **Nicole Jacobs**

Since her appointment to the role of Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner in September 2019, Nicole has begun energetically putting her 20 plus years of experience in domestic abuse policy and intervention to work, driving improvements to transform the response to domestic abuse in England and Wales. She is committed to championing victims and survivors of all ages, status, and backgrounds, and to shining a light on practices that fail them. Nicole began her career at the Alabama State Coalition Against Domestic Violence in the United States. In 1999, she came to London as an early worker at ADVANCE, one of the first advocacy services in the UK. In 2000, she began working at Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, expanding the coordinated community response efforts into health settings. Before becoming CEO of Standing Together in 2013, she held several senior leadership positions at highly respected organizations, including Special Projects Director at SafeLives, and Senior Operations Manager at Refuge.

## **Fiona Wayne**

Fiona is an expert in policymaking in the higher education sector. She manages UUK's programme to support members to address all forms of GBV and harassment. Due to the increase in incidents of domestic and tech mediated abuse in wider society during the pandemic, Fiona felt it would be useful to see if UUK could offer support to universities by raising awareness of resources that could support universities in working with staff and students subjected to domestic abuse, and to share examples of interventions across the sector. This is the first time that UUK has done work in this area. In order to do this, they worked with expert academics and external support organisations such as Safe Lives to support UUK's work in this area, as well as drawing on professional support staff working with students and staff in universities.

## **Professor Graham J. Towl**

Professor Towl was the Pro Vice Chancellor Chair of the Sexual Violence Task Force at Durham University in 2015. He is the co-author of two books on the subject of addressing sexual violence in Higher Education (HE). Previously he has worked with women survivors of intimate partner violence and imprisoned perpetrators of sexual violence. He was formerly the Chief Psychologist at the Ministry of Justice, UK.

**Farah Nazeer**

A policy, advocacy, public affairs, campaigns and communications professional, Farah Nazeer has over 20 years of professional executive management experience in the voluntary sector, including five directorships. Much of Farah's work has been on women's rights, with a proven history of success in policy and public campaigning at local, national and international levels. In Farah's previous role, she served on the senior leadership team at Action Aid UK as the Deputy Director of Advocacy, working to end gender-based violence and ensure women's economic rights. Prior to Action Aid, Farah worked for Lumos, an organisation whose mission is to end the institutionalisation of children globally by 2050, as their Special Advisor on Advocacy. Farah was a local authority Councillor for almost a decade working on local service provision, health, environment and accountability. Farah previously worked for Bond, the UK membership organisation for NGOs working on international issues, where she moved from her role as Director of Policy and Campaigns into the position of Joint Interim CEO. Farah has also worked at the Motor Neurone Disease Association as Director of External Affairs and at the Women's Institute, the largest women's membership organisation in the UK, as Head of Public Affairs.

**Dr Charlotte Proudman**

Dr Proudman specialises in complex legal cases regarding domestic abuse and parental alienation. Charlotte has single-handedly successfully appealed cases where the family courts have failed to have regard to allegations of domestic abuse and ordered contact between a parent and child contrary to PD12J. She is working on several Human Rights Act claims that directly challenge the family court's approach in failing to have regard to the impact of domestic abuse on victims and children leaving them at risk of harm. She has appeared on the BBC and published in the Independent about the family court's failure to address domestic abuse. Charlotte was co-author of an open letter signed by over 130 leaders calling for major changes to the family court's approach in domestic abuse cases, which resulted in the government adopting a number of their recommendations. Charlotte is working closely with MPs and women's rights organisations to draft pioneering amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill to protect victims and their children from domestic abuse.

**Suzanne Jacob OBE**

Suzanne worked for the UK Government on some of its most challenging and high-profile crime and security policies, many of which had complex legal and international dimensions. She led a significant part of the security programme for the 2012 Olympics, for which she was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List 2013. She joined SafeLives in 2015, became Deputy Chief Executive in January 2016 and Chief Executive in December 2017. Suzanne has also worked for years in a voluntary capacity for organisations such as Victim Support, helping people deal with the aftermath of serious and violent crimes.

Suzanne has provided analytical and public affairs advice to the Private Equity Foundation-Impetus Trust and lectured at University College London on the role of intelligence in Government policy-making. Suzanne has worked overseas several times, including as a strategy consultant to women's security NGO Breakthrough India, in Delhi.

### **Amy Norton**

Amy is Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Office for Students. As well as overseeing the implementation of OfS's Public Sector Equality Duty objectives and action plan, she leads on work to tackle sexual harassment, violence and hate crime affecting students, and OfS's work to enhance support for students experiencing mental health difficulties. Amy works within the Directorate for Access, Inclusion and Skills, aiming to identify and promote effective practice in E,D&I in the context of the new higher education regulatory framework. Outside of work, Amy is a Trustee Board member of Gloucestershire Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre.

### **Dr Geetanjali Gangoli**

Dr Gangoli works in the in the field of gender-based violence, and her specialism is in looking at the intersecting roles of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability in terms of the perpetuation, the experience of and the prevention of gender-based violence and abuse, including social and feminist responses. Her work is interdisciplinary, drawing on, and contributing to the disciplines of sociology, social work, feminist gender studies, legal and policy studies. She is concerned with the implications for practice, and the intersections between policy and practice; particularly around issues concerning BME communities, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence, and understanding and preventing gender-based violence in university settings.

### **Professor Paul Miller**

Professor Miller has researched gender-based violence (GBV) in Commonwealth countries. He is a member of the None-in-Three Research Centre at the University of Huddersfield where he is working with colleagues to develop bespoke school curriculum addressing GBV in Uganda (early marriages), Jamaica (childhood sexual abuse), UK (intimate partner violence) and India (gender stereotypes). An education consultant, he is founder/director of Education Equity Services and President of the Commonwealth Council for Education Administration and Management (CCEAM).

### **Dr Gayle Brewer**

Dr Brewer is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Liverpool. She has published over 80 peer-reviewed journal articles, in addition to numerous books and book chapters.

Dr Brewer's research focuses on gender-based violence including sexual coercion, sexual harassment, and honour abuse. This research covers the experiences of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders in both the UK and globally. Recently, funding has been obtained for research investigating gender-based harassment and bystander behaviour in University campuses in Guatemala. She has led or contributed to a range of professional body responses to policy proposals focused on domestic violence and sexual health. Recent research has focused on disability within academia and a book entitled 'Disability in Higher Education: Investigating Stigma and Disclosure Amongst Disabled Academics' is currently in preparation.

### **Dr Lorraine Sheridan**

Dr Sheridan is a Chartered Forensic Psychologist from the UK who now lives and works in Australia. She completed Europe's first PhD on stalking and has published five books and more than 50 papers on the subject. Her research has taken an applied, interventionist angle. In the UK Lorraine was a police accredited offender profiler and she compiles psychological reports related to offenders, highlighting the risks posed by known or unknown suspects. She regularly gives case management advice to the police and other agencies about harassment, violence, risk assessment, threat assessment, malicious communications and similar topics. After a long stint as a senior academic in universities in the UK, Lorraine is now an Associate Professor at Curtin University in Perth. She is a founder member of the Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals and President of the Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals. Her risk checklist for stalking has been adopted by most English and Welsh police forces and partner agencies.

### **Lorraine O'Brien**

A former global commercial director of Chelsea Football Club, senior director at Trinity Mirror, and CEO of Charities Trust, Lorraine has 25 years' experience of leading businesses, directing their commercial strategies, and driving growth through partnerships for global brands. Lorraine has broad sector experience gained from working with companies such as Walt Disney, Siemens, Emirates Airlines and Everton Football Club. Appointed as CEO of The Employer's Initiative for Domestic Abuse in June, Lorraine's experience of working with and generating action by big business is driving the EIDA's membership growth, fundraising and reach of support.

### **Dr Emma Katz**

Dr Katz is Senior Lecturer in Childhood and Youth at Liverpool Hope University. Her research explores coercive control-based domestic abuse and its impacts on child and adult victims/survivors. Dr Katz's research has won Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)'s Corinna Seith Prize and the Wiley Prize for best paper in Child Abuse Review. Her ground-breaking new book *Coercive Control in Children's and Mothers' Lives* will be published by Oxford University Press.

## Appendix 2. Prevalence calculation

**185,833 UK university staff and students suffer domestic abuse or violence every year.**

**Estimate based on the sum of the following 2 totals:**

- 1. 162, 073** university students (full/part-time) experienced domestic abuse.
- 2. 23,760** university staff experienced domestic abuse.

**Calculation 1: Total = 162,073**

- 2,532,390 students at HE institutions in the UK in 2019/20 (source: [HESA](#))
- 6.4% of students experienced domestic abuse year-ending March 2020 (source: [ONS](#)). In the absence of prevalence data by occupation in Scotland and Northern Ireland, we applied this percentage (England and Wales) across the total UK HE student numbers.

**Calculation 2: Total = 23,760**

- 439,995\* staff working at UK universities 2018/2019 (source: [Universities UK](#))
- 5.4% of people in employment experienced domestic abuse in the year-ending March 2020 (source: [ONS](#)). In the absence of prevalence data by occupation in Scotland and Northern Ireland, we applied this percentage (England and Wales) across the total UK HE staff numbers.

**Total number of UK university staff and students experiencing domestic abuse every year:**

**TOTAL = 185,833**

\*Excluding atypical staff, i.e., those whose working arrangements are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider.

## Appendix 3: Inclusive digital poster campaign for staff and students



Domestic abuse guidance for staff and students.  
Commissioned by Moni Akinsanya, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager,  
Human Resources, Liverpool John Moores University.



Universities have clear legal, moral, and financial drivers to develop domestic abuse policy, to reduce the devastating impact on staff and students at their place of work or study.

Dr Roxanne Khan, Director,  
HARM network, UCLan



## Dr. Roxanne Khan

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