



# Domestic Abuse in the Workplace

## Introduction

This policy is issued by way of guidance on the Group’s policy and practice. It does not form part of an employee’s contract of employment or otherwise have any contractual effect on the Gentoo Agreement on Pay and Terms and Conditions of Employment (“the Orange Book”) or the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Services (“the Green Book” and “the Red Book”). This policy may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time by the organisation at its discretion.

## Contribution to organisational goals

The vision and values of the Group effectively set the headline rationale and culture for the Group. This policy operates within the vision and values:

<b>Group Vision and Values</b>
Great Homes – Strong Communities – Inspired People
Do the right thing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Comply with legal obligations to ensure health and safety at work</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Minimise harm to employee health</i></li><li>• <i>A supportive and open culture</i></li></ul></li></ul>
Make a difference <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Support employees within work to enable them to make a difference</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Offer supportive, practical help to employees</i></li></ul></li></ul>
Work together <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Ensure measures are in place to manage employee wellbeing</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Employees feel supported by one another</i></li></ul></li></ul>
Keep learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Line managers understand the principles of this policy</i></li><li>• <i>Appropriate training and individual support is available</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Raise awareness of health issues at work</i></li></ul></li></ul>
Give all you’ve got <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Support employees to maintain their health and wellbeing</i></li></ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Employees feel valued and fairly treated</i></li></ul> |
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## **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or in line with legislation or business need.

Overall accountability for this policy lies with the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and responsibility lies with the Head of Human Resources. This policy is grade 3 and changes require the approval of the Executive Director (Corporate Services).

## **Accessibility**

If any aspect of this policy causes you difficulty on account of any disability, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this issue with the HR team, who will make appropriate arrangements.

## **Regulation and Legislation**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Rights Act 1999
- Equalities Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

## **Policy Introduction**

Gentoo has a responsibility to provide all staff with a safe and effective working environment. For some staff, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety.

Gentoo acknowledges that domestic abuse is a significant problem which has a devastating impact on victims and their families. This procedure represents a commitment to take all reasonable steps possible to combat the reality and impact of domestic abuse on those being abused and to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.

This procedure ensures that both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse are aware of the support that is available within the organisation. It also provides guidance to line managers when supporting staff who are affected by domestic abuse. It is important to note however that domestic abuse is not condoned under any circumstance.

## Definition

Domestic abuse is defined by the Home Office as:

*“Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 16 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or are family members, regardless of gender and sexuality.”*

This definition includes honour - based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of esteem to loss of life.

See appendix 1 - Types of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity. When dealing with domestic abuse it is important to recognise differences between all protected characteristics. It follows that different approaches and resources are needed when addressing domestic abuse with different groups.

## The impact of domestic abuse in the workplace

It should be noted that there may be incidents which occur in the workplace or specifically affect the work of a member of staff.

Possible signs of domestic abuse include:

- Changes in behaviour including uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration
- Changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason
- Arriving late or leaving early
- Poor attendance or high presenteeism without an explanation
- Needing regular time off for appointments
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing
- Increased turnover

## **The impact of domestic abuse on work colleagues**

Domestic abuse also affects people close to the victim and this can include work colleagues.

Some effects may include:

- Being followed to or from work
- Being subject to questioning about the victim's contact details or locations
- Covering for other workers during absence from work
- Trying to deal with the abuse and fear for their own safety
- Being unaware of the abuse or not knowing how to help

## **The impact of domestic abuse on the employer**

Some effects may include:

- Negative impact on productivity, performance and morale
- Staff turnover, as employees may have to leave work or move away to escape abuse

Gentoo expects all staff to report their concerns if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. A member of staff should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. Alternatively a confidential reporting line is now available through Crime Stoppers 0800 111 4444. This is a 24 hour hotline that allows any member of staff to report any concern they may have about a colleague or practices in the workplace. The hotline can be used anonymously.

Our Business Manager – Domestic Abuse and the trained Domestic Violence Champions who are all member of the Northumbria Domestic Violence Champions Network will also be available to provide advice, support and guidance to both members of staff and line managers. You will find details of Gentoo's Domestic Violence Champions on the intranet or you can contact Kelly Henderson, Business Manager Domestic Abuse for details.

See appendix 2 - Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions Network, Role and Responsibilities (Manager and Champion)

## **Confidentiality and right to privacy**

Staff who disclose that they are a victim of domestic abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other colleagues without their permission.

There are however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when there are concerns regarding children, vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of their staff. In these circumstances, the member of staff will be informed as to the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

Confidentiality cannot always be assured for staff who disclose that they are a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

## **Support for staff**

There are a number of ways in which staff experiencing domestic abuse can be supported by Gentoo:

- Through offering practical support
- Raising awareness generally of the issues and in particular amongst managers
- Providing training opportunities to line managers
- Signpost to an appropriate counselling service if appropriate
- Taking a clear anti-abuse stance against perpetrators

It is essential staff feel able to disclose this personal information and are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager. However if they feel unable to raise this with their line manager, support is available from the Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions (see intranet).

## **Support for line managers**

Victims - identifying domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is unlikely to be disclosed easily by victims or perpetrators. There are a number of steps that can be taken to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse including how to recognise the problem, respond, provide support and refer to the appropriate help.

See appendix 3 - Ten steps to address the effects of domestic abuse

The guidance for line managers when facilitating a conversation with a member of staff about domestic abuse is found in appendix 4 - Asking difficult questions - Guidance for line managers.

If a line managers require further advice or assistance before speaking to a member of staff, further support is available from Human Resources (HR) Advisers/managers/ Business Manager Domestic Abuse or the DSV Champions.

## **Support available**

Line managers may consider offering a broad range of support to staff experiencing domestic abuse including:

- Annual leave, flexi - time or lieu time for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Special leave provisions (e.g. compassionate leave or unpaid leave) where the officer or member of staff's annual leave entitlement has been exhausted.

- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns using existing procedures i.e. flexible working.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with the perpetrator in a customer facing role.
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example blocking emails / screening telephone calls; alerting reception / security if the perpetrator is known to come to the workplace; and ensuring arrangements are in place for safely travelling to and from work
- Re-deployment or relocation.
- With the member of staff's consent:
  - advise colleagues on a need – to - know basis and agree a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace
  - provide a photograph of the perpetrator to line management, security staff and reception
- Review the security of personal information held, such as temporary or new address and bank details.

The right of staff to make their own decision about the course of action at every stage will be respected. It is recognised that a member of staff may need some time to decide what to do and may try different options during this process.

## Perpetrators

Domestic abuse perpetrated by staff will not be condoned nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. Staff should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter which can lead to criminal convictions. Conduct outside of work may lead to disciplinary action being taken against a member of staff; as such conduct may undermine the confidence and trust the organisation has in them. However, Gentoo recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting perpetrators to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If a member of staff discloses perpetrating domestic abuse, the police should be informed as well as the HR Advisor so that the disciplinary or other internal procedures can be considered. However, the member of staff will be provided with information about the services and support available to them (see contact details for Respect and Perpetrator Programmes at the end of the document).

This procedure can be applicable in cases where a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner
- Had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them
- Presented concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship

Gentoo will ensure:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- All staff will receive guidance and support

- Investigations will be sufficiently independent

The accused member of staff will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly
- Helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- Kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process

## **Victims and perpetrators working for Gentoo**

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse work for Gentoo; appropriate action will be taken.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the perpetrator, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim. This may include a change of duties or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programs. Further advice can be sought from the HR Advisers/Manager.

## **Further guidance**

For further advice please click the link below for local support contacts:

See appendix 5 - Domestic abuse – North East England external contacts

## **Appendix 1 -Types of domestic abuse**

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

### **Emotional and psychological**

Emotional or psychological abuse can be either verbal or nonverbal. This kind of domestic abuse chips away at the confidence and independence of the victim to make them compliant and limit their ability to leave their abuser.

Emotional abuse can include verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming and shaming, isolation, intimidation, threats of violence and controlling behaviour.

### **Physical**

A wide range of different behaviour can come under the heading of physical abuse and can include punching, slapping, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair out, pushing, shoving, burning and strangling.

### **Sexual**

Rape and sexual abuse is common in abusive relationships due to the victim's refusal of consent being ignored. Any situation where someone is forced to take part in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse.

### **Financial**

Economic or financial abuse limits the victim's ability to get help. The abuser controls finances; withholds money or credit cards; makes someone unreasonably account for the money they spend; exploits assets; withholds basic necessities; prevents someone from working or sabotages the victim's job and deliberately runs up debts.

## **Appendix 2 – Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions Network Role and Responsibilities (Manager and Champion)**

The Champions Network will be set up across Northumbria supported by a Steering Group comprised of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Leads in each area and other relevant partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector.

Nominated staff within organisations will be trained and supported to become Champions, to be the link between their organisation and the Network, to be a conduit for information and to assist their business to enhance their response to individuals affected by domestic and sexual violence in Northumbria.

Manager responsibilities:

- Select committed individual(s) and encourage and support them in their role as Domestic and Sexual Violence Champion throughout their organisation.
- Ensure the Champion has adequate time away from their normal role for training and network meetings.
- Support the Champion to be a point of contact in their organisation
- Commit to enhancing the overall level of knowledge and awareness within their organisation in relation to domestic and sexual violence.
- Work with the Champion to implement and develop domestic and sexual violence policies and procedures within their organisation

Champion responsibilities:

- Act as a conduit for information between their organisation and the Champion's Network as necessary.
- Attend 1 day domestic violence training and a minimum of two other training/network events per year.
- Be a point of contact for their organisation for information relating to domestic and sexual violence
- Raise awareness and enhance the overall knowledge of domestic and sexual violence within their organisation.
- Ensure up to date and accessible information is available in relation to support services for victims.
- Ensure leaflets and posters are displayed and available within their organisation.
- Contribute to the continued development and effectiveness of the Champions Network.
- Provide feedback to the Network in relation to Champions training and development

## **Appendix 3 – Ten steps to address the effects of domestic abuse**

There are a number of steps that line managers can take to address the effects of domestic abuse. In many cases it is about being aware and signposting to the organisations that provide specialist support.

Below are ten steps that can be taken:

### **Recognise the problem**

1. Look for sudden changes in behaviour and / or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.
2. Look for changes in the way the member of staff dresses, for example excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn

### **Respond**

3. Believe a member of staff if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof.
4. Reassure the member of staff that the Group has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered

### **Provide support**

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if a member of staff is receiving harassing calls.
6. Agree with the member of staff what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace.
7. Ensure the member of staff does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that they have arrangements for getting safely to and from work.
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.
9. Provide access to supportive literature i.e. leaflets and posters. Ensure these are placed in discrete locations e.g. putting up posters on the backs of toilet doors.

### **Refer to the appropriate help**

10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer staff to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse.

## **Appendix 4 – Asking difficult questions – guidance for line managers**

If you suspect that a member of staff is experiencing domestic abuse, you should facilitate a conversation to discuss this and identify /implement appropriate support.

Shying away from the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. Often staff will not feel confident in speaking up, so making the first move to begin a conversation can be key.

You should ask the member of staff indirect questions, to help establish a relationship and develop empathy. Below are some examples of questions that could be used:

- How are you doing at the moment? Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
- I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
- Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence / under-performance at work?
- Is everything all right at home?
- What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

Avoid victim blaming. It is important that you are able to provide a non-judgmental and supportive environment. Respecting boundaries and privacy is essential.

Even if you disagree with the decisions being made regarding a member of staff's relationship, it is important to understand that a victim of domestic abuse may make a number of attempts to leave their partner before they are finally able to do so. Your role is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear that members of staff will be supported and outline what help is available.

## **Appendix 5 –Domestic Abuse External Contacts**

There are many local support groups that can offer further advice and practical guidance on domestic abuse:

### **Gateshead**

Domestic Abuse Support Service 0191 433 2622

This service provides practical and emotional support to victims of domestic abuse to enable them to live independently. This service offers support to any victim over the age of 16.

Gateshead Women's Refuge 0191 477 9309

This service provides emergency housing and support for women and children who are fleeing domestic abuse.

Safer Families 0191 4335600

This service is a domestic abuse intervention service, which seeks to increase the safety of victims of domestic abuse.

Tyneside Women's Health 0191 477 7898

Tyneside Women's Health facilitates a range of support groups for women affected by domestic abuse.

Victim Support 0191 477 8395

This service provides a free and confidential service, offering emotional, practical and non-financial support to those who are suffering or have survived domestic abuse.

### **Newcastle**

Angelou Centre 0191 2260394

The Angelou Centre offers 'women only', community-based provision to advance economic and social independence for women, who are excluded due to disadvantages of race, gender and age.

Panah Refuge 0191 284 6998

The service provides emergency housing and support for BME women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. They aim to provide safe, temporary accommodation and support, and enable service users to make informed choices and decisions regarding their future.

Tyneside Women's Health 0191 477 7898

Tyneside Women's Health facilitates a range of support groups for women affected by domestic abuse.

Victim Support – Northumbria 0845 277 0977 or 0191 281 0491

This charity provides free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family, friends and anyone else affected across England and Wales.

Women's Aid 0191 265 2148

Provide help, advice, secure accommodation and an outreach service for women and children.

### **Northumberland**

Cease24 01665 606881

A domestic abuse project which provides a service to women and men affected by domestic violence and abuse. The project offers support to clients at high or medium risk, and is open to anyone regardless of gender or sexuality. The services provided include practical and emotional outreach support and an IDVA (independent domestic violence advocate) service. In North Northumberland they have a specialist children's worker who works with children and young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years.

Sixty Eighty Thirty 01434 806030

Sixty Eighty Thirty offer practical and emotional support to women and their children in Northumberland who have experienced domestic abuse at any time in their lives, Regardless of sexual orientation, religion, culture or gender assigned at birth.

### **North Tyneside**

Acorns Domestic Abuse Outreach Service 07552 164 256

Outreach, support, structured women's groups, advice and information.

Acorns 0191 2006302

Counselling, support and advice for children and young people affected by domestic violence.

North Tyneside Harbour Outreach Service 0191 251 3305

Support and advice for women and men in the community who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.

North Tyneside Harbour

Tel: 0191 251 3305 - 24 hours

Accommodation and support for women and children.

### **South Tyneside**

Family Support Service 0191 424 4737

Provides counselling and therapy to both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse who have a learning disability.

Gateshead and South Tyneside Victim Support 0191 477 8395

Confidential help and support to victims, their friends and families and witnesses of domestic abuse/other crimes

Options 0191 567 8282

The IDVA (independent domestic violence advocate) service within Options works with 18 year olds and over in South Tyneside. Options work with female only whilst IDVA works with both males and females around domestic abuse whether its partner or family. Options run the Freedom Programme and the IDVA service work to reduce the risk by supporting with housing, injunctions, court and refugee status.

Places for People in Partnership with South Tyneside Women's Refuge

0191 454 8257

Offers help and support, as well as providing safe, temporary and emergency accommodation to women with or without children suffering from domestic abuse.

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland Evening Helpline: 0800 0352794 or 0191 232 9858

Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre is an organisation run by women for women which aims to: provide information, support and counselling for women aged 16 and over who have been raped or sexually abused.

Safeguarding Adults Unit 0845 130 4959 / 0191 456 2093 (out of hours)

This service provides advice to anyone who has concerns for someone (aged 18 or over) who may be suffering domestic abuse.

South Tyneside Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Programme (STDAPP) Telephone:  
0191 4545335

Support for men wanting to change their aggressive behaviour.

South Tyneside IDVA Service (Independent Domestic Violence Advisers)  
0191 456 7577 or mobile: 0754 520 8670 / 0754 520 8671

Provides crisis intervention, support advice and information to high risk victims of domestic abuse.

## **Sunderland**

Wearside Women in Need 0800 066 5555 or 0191 4161506

Wearside Women in Need provides help, advice, support and refuge accommodation to victims of domestic abuse.

## **Specialist Services**

BME Women:

Angelou Centre 0191 2260394

The Angelou Centre offers 'women only', community-based provision to advance economic and social independence for women, who are excluded due to disadvantages of race, gender and age.

Panah Refuge 0191 284 6998

The service provides emergency housing and support for BME women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. They aim to provide safe, temporary accommodation and support, and enable service users to make informed choices and decisions regarding their future.

## **Support for Perpetrators**

Respect 0808 802 4040 <http://respect.uk.net/>

Support service for male perpetrators

## **Contact Centre Information**

Impact Family Services 0191 567 8282

Gentoo work in partnership with Impact Family Services who provide support for divorced or separated parents. Many services are free of charge and Gentoo staff receive discount on paid services such as Child Contact Centre arrangements.  
[www.impactfs.co.uk](http://www.impactfs.co.uk)

## **Related policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Employee Health and Wellbeing
- Disciplinary
- Sickness Absence Management
- Redeployment
- Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment

If you are unhappy about the application of this policy, please refer to the Group's Grievance or Whistleblowing policies.