# Ladygrove Primary School

# Domestic Abuse Policy

October 2026

To be reviewed October 2027

There are some 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women) and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related. (Domestic Abuse Act – July 2022)

Data for YE March 2025 showed that an estimated 10.6% of people aged 16 years and over were victims of at least one of the crime types of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking in the last year (12.8% of women and 8.4% of men). This equates to 5.1 million people aged 16 years and over (3.2 million women and 2.0 million men).

The Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 resulted in several changes, these include:

- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right;
- A Domestic Abuse Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving domestic abuse services;
- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'
- New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors – including a ban on abusers from cross-examining their victims, and a guarantee that survivors can access special measures (including separate waiting rooms, entrances and exits and screens);
- New criminal offences – including post-separation coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images;
- A ban on abusers using a defence of 'rough sex';
- A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing, and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing if they need to escape an abuser;
- A ban on GPs for charging for medical evidence of domestic abuse, including for legal aid;
- A duty on the government to issue a code of practice on how data is shared between the public services survivors report to (such as the police) and immigration enforcement

Ladygrove Primary School is committed to supporting any member of staff who is affected by domestic abuse. It recognises that its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse; as a survivor of domestic abuse, someone who is currently living with domestic abuse, an individual impacted upon by domestic abuse or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the person who has harmed. Ladygrove Primary School has a 'zero tolerance' position on domestic abuse and is committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support and assistance. This policy also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

By developing an effective domestic abuse policy and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and we will also send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

Ladygrove Primary School recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue and undertakes to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse in terms of current employment or future development.

This policy is part of Ladygrove Primary School's commitment to family friendly working, and seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance; and enhance the reputation of Ladygrove Primary School as an employer of choice.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), Ladygrove Primary School recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all staff. Therefore this policy applies to all staff at Ladygrove Primary School.

**Definition of domestic abuse – Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

The act creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse based on the existing cross-government definition:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse
- Digital and online abuse, including 'revenge porn'
- Stalking and harassment

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and 'personally connected'.

'Personally connected' is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

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

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."* *This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

**Who may experience domestic abuse and how they might be affected**

- "**1 in 4 women** and **1** in **6 men** in their lifetime. Leads to, on average, two **women** being murdered each week and 30 men per year"
- Older women and men are less likely to report their experiences of domestic abuse

- Those with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual violence than non-disabled people
- Ethnic minority women and men face additional barriers to accessing support. Their experiences may be compounded by discrimination. They may be unwilling to seek help from statutory agencies because they fear a racist response
- Women and men from different cultural backgrounds might experience abuse in different forms, such as so called 'honour' based violence
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual women and men can be vulnerable to abusers who threaten to 'out' them to colleagues, employers and family members
- Transgender women and men have fewer services available to them, and can face similar emotional abuse
- Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse, and existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after giving birth
- Men experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence find it more difficult to disclose abuse and often find more barriers to accessing support. For more information on understanding the indicators that a male employee may be experiencing domestic abuse please use the following link https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/respect/attachment/file/16/Respect-Toolkit-for-Work-with-Male-Victims-of-Domestic-Abuse-2019.pdf
- Perpetrators may be very reluctant to acknowledge what they are doing and to ask for help.

**Identification of the problem**

Whilst it is for the individual themselves to recognise they are a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim. These may include;

- The member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager.
- Staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse.
- Visible signs of injury with unlikely explanations, it is important not to make assumptions.
- It may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance.
- A change in the persons working patterns, e.g. frequent lateness, absenteeism, needing to leave work early and spending increased time at work with no explanation
- Changes to productivity and performance
- Changes in the use of phone/email e.g. increase in personal calls, avoiding calls, or strong reaction to calls/texts/email
- Changes in behaviour/demeanour e.g. becoming quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed, isolating self from colleagues, obsession with time keeping, secretive about home life, worried about children at home
- Change in appearance e.g. change in amount of make-up used, changes in dress, or clothing that doesn't suit the climate
- Partner or ex-partner attending work, or exerting unusual control or demands over work schedule, sending unwanted gifts/flowers

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Managers/colleagues who support staff in such matters should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.

Ladygrove Primary School respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst Ladygrove Primary School strongly encourages victims of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to.

**Confidentiality and right to privacy**

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

There are, however, circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These include safeguarding concerns about a child or an adult at risk, or where action is needed to protect the safety of employees or others. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the welfare and best interests of the child must remain central. Information will be shared promptly, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis; data protection law does not prevent the sharing of information necessary to safeguard a child. In circumstances where Ladygrove Primary School has to breach confidentiality, it will seek specialist advice from its HR Officer before doing so. If it decides to proceed after taking advice, it will explain to the employee why this is necessary and seek the employee's agreement where possible, unless doing so would place a child or another person at greater risk or cause avoidable delay. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Where domestic abuse in a same sex relationship is disclosed, due regard will be paid to the double disclosure of confidential information particularly where the individual recipient of abuse may not be out at work.

**Support for individuals**

Ladygrove Primary School recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and Ladygrove Primary School will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.

Ladygrove Primary School and Union/Professional organisation representatives will work together cooperatively to help staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Ladygrove Primary School will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

**Responding to a survivor**

- Listen to and validate their experience. Don't be afraid to ask whether they are safe or scared at home as a direct question; if the person knows you are comfortable asking the question, they will believe you are confident in responding to the answer"
- Remain sensitive/non-judgemental/discreet/supportive
- Allocate time in private to listen
- Not seek proof of the abuse – validate their experience
- Not contact the abuser (even if asked to do so)
- Not adopt the role of support worker, but signpost to appropriate agencies and specialist support available and give support to contact
- If the employee is disclosing fears for their safety, then they should be advised to call the Police and should be supported in so doing.
- **Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service** and **West Mercia Women's Aid** will always provide advice and support. If the employee consents, they are able to use a recognised risk assessment tool with the employee (face to face, over the telephone or via an online platform), do some safety planning with the employee and advise the employer of actions to help promote their employee's safety and well-being.

Line managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser.
- Work with Human Resources to consider the possibility of redeployment or relocation.
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example blocking telephone numbers to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Using other existing policies, including flexible working.
- Access to counselling/support services in paid time.
- Access to support from Specialist DA Services which may include 1-2-1 regular support or group work depending on the colleagues' individual needs; assessed in partnership with specialist service.

Managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage.

Other existing provisions (including occupational health, independent counselling service, others) will also be signposted to staff as a means of support

**Organisational planning**

All employees will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisal, leaflets and posters.

Ladygrove Primary School will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or working hours. All victims of domestic abuse should feel safe at home, employers should be aware of any disclosure that suggests they are experiencing stalking or harassment.

**Disclosure of abuse**

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or colleague. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel victims, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

Ladygrove Primary School will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse. A further member of staff, selected by the member of staff experiencing the abuse, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff.

Our Child and Family Support worker, Laura Edenborough, is a trained Haven ambassador.

**Training**

Ladygrove Primary School is committed to ensuring all managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings or awareness raising sessions will ensure that all managers are able to:

- Identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse.
- Respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner.
- Provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support.
- Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning.
- Signpost to other organisations and sources of support.
- Understand that they are not counsellors.

**Safety planning**

Ladygrove Primary School will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, Ladygrove Primary School will encourage its employees to contact a specialist support agency (who can undertake a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

Ladygrove Primary School will work with the employee and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety at work and at home as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues.

**If the victim and the perpetrator work in the same organisation**

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, Ladygrove Primary School will take appropriate action.

Ladygrove Primary School will take advice from their Human Resources officer in considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse. Action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace and how 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 for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices. Changes to work patterns for both parties will only happen if it is safe to do so.

Ladygrove Primary School encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

**Perpetrators of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. Ladygrove Primary School recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds. Employees should report if they suspect a colleague is a perpetrator of abuse.

If an employee approaches Ladygrove Primary School about their abusive behaviour, Ladygrove Primary School will provide information about the services and support available to them.

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

Ladygrove Primary School views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the *organisation's* Code of Conduct for disciplinary purposes.

Ladygrove Primary School's Code of Conduct is intended to inform all staff, of the standards of conduct expected of them inside and outside of Ladygrove Primary School. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which staff members are expected to abide. Staff members are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on *the organisation* and its reputation.

In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in his/her current role(s), due to a caution or conviction. Ladygrove Primary School views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the organisation's Code of Conduct for disciplinary purposes.

These procedures can be applicable in cases where an employee has:

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

Ladygrove Primary School is committed to ensuring that:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure.
- All employees will receive guidance and support.
- Confidentiality will be maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know.

- Investigations will be thorough and independent.
- All cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays.
- All efforts will be made to resolve the matter within 4-6 weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

The alleged person who has harmed will be:

- Treated fairly and honestly
- Spoken to if it is safe to do so
- 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
- Advised to contact their union or professional organisation

**There are five potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:**

1. A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
2. Disciplinary action by the employer
3. Providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
4. Identifying risk
5. Referral to Local Authority regarding risk to general public/vulnerable people

If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, social media or email it is essential that this is investigated to establish in the first instance, whether the person is being coercively controlled, so therefore may be another victim, before assuming that they have committed a disciplinary offence.

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

**Professional role and risk management**

Ladygrove Primary School will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children and the procedures of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership when responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations about people who work with children. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, and "children" means everyone under the age of 18. Concerns and allegations must be acted on immediately, including those that may not meet the harm threshold.

A safeguarding concern or allegation may relate to a person who works with children, including a member of staff, supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer or contractor, who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;
- behaved, or may have behaved, in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Any concern about a child must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy without delay and managed in accordance with the school's child protection policy. A clear record must be made of the concern, actions taken, decisions reached, the reasons for those decisions and the outcome. If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of immediate harm, contact the police on 999 and/or children's social care immediately. Family Connect can be contacted on 01952 385385.

Each local authority has a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers, liaises with the police and other agencies, and monitors progress so cases are dealt with as quickly as possible while maintaining a thorough and fair process.

The Local Authority Designated Officer for Telford and Wrekin is Glenn Ashbrooke who can be contacted on 01952 382848 or glenn.ashbrooke@telford.gov.uk

Concerns or allegations that meet, or may meet, the harm threshold must be reported immediately to the headteacher. Where the concern relates to the headteacher, it must be reported to the chair of governors. The case manager should discuss the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer without delay and ordinarily within one working day. Any safeguarding concern or allegation, no matter how small, about a member of staff, supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer or contractor must be managed under the school's procedures. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold must still be shared, recorded and managed in accordance with the school's low-level concerns policy. In relation to adults at risk, referrals must be directed through Family Connect on 01952 385385.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed in line with organisational procedures unless there are changes in legislation, best practice or other organisation policies impact on its effectiveness.

| Policy- Document Status | | | |
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| **Date of Policy Creation** | **December 2023** | **Named Responsibility** | **Kirsty Stewart** |
| **Date of review completion** | **NA** | **Named Responsibility** | **NA** |
| **Inception of new Policy** | **October 2026** | **Named Responsibility** | **Kirsty Stewart** |
| **Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body** | | October 2026 | |
| **Review Date** | | October 2027 | |