



## DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) introduces the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

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

### STATEMENT

Everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form. Domestic abuse is wholly unacceptable and inexcusable behaviour, and responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. Nippertime strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that abuse against people is unacceptable and that such abuse will not be condoned.

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. It occurs regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, religion, mental or physical ability.

Domestic abuse is about the misuse of power and exercise of control by one adult over another adult within the context of an intimate or close family relationship. It can be carried out by a partner or ex-partner (married, co-habiting or single sex relationship), by a family member, or by another person living in the same household. This includes issues such as honour-based violence and forced marriage. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly or indirectly related, in-laws or stepfamily.

Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional, and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic abuse can be a single incident or a series of incidents and can include:

**Psychological** - Intimidation, threats to harm, threats to kidnap children, blackmail, destruction of pets, property, mind games and stalking

**Physical** - Inflicting or attempting to injure, grabbing, pinching, biting, kicking, stabbing, weapons, withholding medications, food, funds

**Sexual** - Marital rape, acquaintance rape, forced sex after physical beating, fondling, and forced prostitution

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**Financial** - Maintaining control of earned income, withholding money, and running up debt in the victim's name

**Emotional** - Undermining or attempting to undermine the victims' sense of worth, constant criticism, name calling, insults, put downs, silent treatment, repeatedly making and breaking promises, harming, or making threats to harm pets

**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. (Home Office 2013)

### **SUPPORT and CONFIDENTIALITY**

Nippertime recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue and undertakes not to discriminate against anyone who has been subject to domestic abuse in terms of current employment or career development.

Nippertime believes it is important to promote the understanding that everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form and that domestic abuse is wholly unacceptable and inexcusable.

Nippertime is aware that the challenges that domestic abuse victims face can manifest themselves in problems such as chronic absenteeism or lower productivity.

That is why when addressing performance and safety issue Nippertime will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation and/or safety problems to support them through a challenging time.

There are some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where an employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees. In these circumstances the employer will discuss with the employee the reason for disclosing any information to a third party and will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. 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.

### **PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a way that will not adversely reflect on the business and its reputation. Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. Perpetrating domestic abuse whilst in the workplace may breach any Code of Conduct. If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse by giving them access to facilities such as telephones or email, then they will be seen as committing a disciplinary offence.

Nippertime will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis. The aim is to reduce risk and support change recognising their role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and

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abusive behaviour of all kinds. If an employee approaches Nippertime about their abusive behaviour, information about services and support available will be provided.

Confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know. There are some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where an employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees.

### **IF THE VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR BOTH WORK FOR NIPPERTIME**

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse work for Nippertime will take appropriate action including:

- consider utilising different working days
- minimising the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim
- offer impartial support

Nippertime recognises that individuals can be exposed to domestic abuse without being abused themselves e.g., the child of a parent who abuses the other parent and this can have traumatic effects.

Nippertime recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue and that incidents of domestic abuse are common and critically affect many people's lives. Nippertime acknowledges that domestic abuse can affect an individual's work performance and that as an employer has a responsibility for health, safety, and welfare at work.

Nippertime is committed to tackling domestic abuse as its effects become apparent in the workplace. The effects of domestic abuse can influence the health and self-confidence of staff who may in turn feel unable to confide in others or seek help. Many of those that experience domestic abuse have difficulty attending work regularly and demonstrate longer term symptoms such as depression, anxiety or stress that consequently affect work performance. Nippertime recognise that it is important to be aware of domestic abuse as a possible cause when staff are depressed, distracted, lacking in self-confidence, or visibly injured. Nippertime therefore strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form and that violence against people is unacceptable.

This policy is therefore applicable whatever the nature of the intimate relationship. It is recognised the majority of those affected are women, although a significant proportion affects men, and this policy applies to men and women equally.

### **Possible Signs of Domestic Abuse**

Survivors of domestic abuse are often reluctant to discuss their situation with their employer or work colleagues. However, there are some signs which might indicate that they are experiencing such problems. It is important to remember that not all survivors behave in the same way, and the following will not be applicable in all cases. Similarly, it is important to note that staff who demonstrate some of the characteristics noted will not always be victims of domestic abuse.

### **Workplace performance**

- special attention may be warranted when for example behaviour changes significantly or if uncharacteristic behaviour is demonstrated for a sustained period

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- absenteeism without proper explanation
- frequent arriving at work late or needing to leave early
- uncharacteristic displays of anxiety, depression, distraction or problems with concentration
- change in the quality of work with no apparent explanation
- receiving upsetting telephone calls, text messages, emails etc. or being the victim of vandalism or threats
- obsession with time
- significant changes in an employee's dress sense
- increase in hours worked for no apparent reason

### **Physical**

- repeated burns, bruises, or other injuries (often with attempts to hide these)
- injuries in areas of the body consistent with falls, walking into doors or other explanations given
- injuries to the chest, breast and abdomen (women are more likely to be injured in these areas and are common injuries in pregnancy)
- injuries to the face, head or neck
- evidence of sexual abuse, or frequent gynaecological problems in women
- frequent unexplained visits to the Doctor or explained with vague symptoms
- frequent use of pain medication
- significant weight loss or gain

### **Emotional**

- panic attacks, anxiety and / or depression
- exhibiting severe stress reactions
- emotional exhaustion, lack of emotional control
- impaired thinking
- decreased concentration / attention span
- eruptions of aggressiveness, anger out of control
- alcohol or drug misuse
- frequent use of minor tranquilisers
- preoccupied with or distracted by the welfare of their children

### **Behavioural**

- displays of fright
- elevated startled response
- withdrawal or personal isolation
- low self-esteem

### **Other**

- secretive about home life
- partner may attempt to limit their work or social contacts
- partner may ridicule them in public
- partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life

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Whilst the above characteristics can be common in those that experience domestic abuse, it is also possible that survivors may demonstrate minimal or occasionally no disruption to their usual behaviour. Where a member of staff suspects that domestic abuse may be affecting a colleague, the provision in this policy should be followed.

Nippertime is aware that the challenges that domestic abuse victims face can manifest.