2.16

Domestic Abuse

Policy statement

Definition

Domestic abuse, as defined in law, occurs when both individuals are aged 16 or over and are 'personally connected'. This includes partners, ex-partners, family members, or carers.

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** broadened the definition to include **coercive or controlling behaviour** by an ex-partner. Abuse may consist of:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other forms of abuse

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, age, social background, religion, sexuality or ethnicity, and domestic abuse can happen at any stage in a relationship.

Recognising Signs in Adults

- Frequent unexplained injuries
- Stress, anxiety, or depression
- Isolation from social and work networks
- Personality changes (jumpiness or nervousness)
- Self-blame or low self-esteem
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Financial control or lack of money
- Damage to property

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. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children.

Impact on Children

Children who witness or experience domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right. Exposure can have long-term emotional and psychological effects, including:

- Anxiety, depression, or low mood
- Hypervigilance
- Regressive behaviours (bed-wetting, infant-like behaviour)
- Acting out aggression in play or interactions
- Difficulties with self-esteem and relationships

Raising Awareness at Silver Stars

- Staff training to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse.
- Information sharing with external organisations for support.
- Displaying support information in visible areas within the nursery.
- Providing the 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247.
- Sharing relevant policies (Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding, and Child Protection) with all staff.

Reporting Procedures

- Follow the nursery's safeguarding policy.
- Maintain confidentiality unless there is a risk of serious harm to a child or adult.
- Seek guidance from Compass or the DSL where needed.

Honour based abuse

Honour-Based Abuse is a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families or communities to protect perceived cultural or religious beliefs or 'honour'. It may involve:

- Being held against one's will
- Sexual or psychological abuse
- Threats of violence or assault
- Forced marriage

HBA is **illegal** and a violation of human rights, often overlapping with domestic and/or sexual abuse.

Recognising Signs

- Changes in dress or behaviour (e.g., ceasing to wear 'western' clothing)
- Visible injuries or repeated injuries with unlikely explanations

- Anxiety, depression, or self-harm
- Frequent absences from school or nursery
- Restrictions on friendships or attending events

Raising Awareness

- Display support information from external organisations.
- Share HBA, Child Protection, and Safeguarding policies with all staff (including bank and placement staff).

Reporting Procedures

- Follow safeguarding procedures immediately if HBA is suspected.
- Respect confidentiality but report without permission in cases of child protection or immediate risk of serious harm.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage occurs when one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage and are coerced. Duress may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, or emotional pressure. For vulnerable adults lacking capacity to consent, coercion is not required.

Recognising Signs

- Anxiety or distress about upcoming marriage
- Isolation or control by family
- Fear of leaving the home or attending school/work
- Reluctance or inability to make independent decisions

Reporting Procedures

- Follow safeguarding reporting procedures.
- If the person is under 18, report to Children's Social Care.
- If there is imminent danger, contact the Police or the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) on 020 7008 0151.

4. Commitment

Silver Stars Day Nursery is committed to:

- Providing a safe environment for children, families, and staff.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the signs, symptoms, and reporting procedures for domestic abuse, HBA, and forced marriage.

- Working with external agencies to provide timely support.
- Maintaining confidentiality while prioritising the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

This policy was adopted by	Silver Stars Day Nursery
Date	February 2026
Review Date	February 2027
Name of signatory	Jenifer Capper
Role of signatory	Proprietor
Signed: Date:	 February 2026