

Evaluation of Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities



Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM)

University of Central Lancashire

Evaluation of Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities.

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University of Central Lancashire

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Universities have a duty of care to safeguard victims of domestic abuse, but often, the appropriate safeguarding procedures have not been in place to support and protect victims. I am pleased to see that the evaluation of the 'Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities' has shown that as a result of the guidance, more universities are proactively strengthening support for staff and students by creating new or updating existing policy, creating new training, and issuing domestic abuse communications to staff and students.

Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities

The [Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities](#) guidance document aims at raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities and guiding university policymakers in the development and implementation of domestic abuse policies to safeguard and support students and staff.

The objectives of the Guidance Project outputs are to prompt universities to develop new policies or update existing policies, training, and communications, based on the guidance document, and to encourage awareness and understanding of the issues facing victims of domestic abuse so that universities can provide a safer and improved response based on the needs of their diverse student-staff communities.

The Guidance Project outputs were disseminated to all UK universities in early 2021.

The Project was managed by Dr Roxanne Khan, HARM network, University of Central Lancashire, and funded by Research England (QR-SPF) in the amount of £14,225.

1.2 Evaluation aims

The overarching aims of this evaluation were:

- To determine the extent to which the Guidance Project outputs impacted on UK university domestic abuse policymaking, training, and communications.

1.3 Methods

To meet our evaluation aims, we used a Success Case Method approach¹, undertaking various forms of data collection and analysis between 26 January 2023 and 31 July 2023. We gathered, analysed, and synthesised data that were collected as a routine part of the Guidance Project. We asked universities who had been sent the guidance

¹ Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2005). The Success Case Method: A Strategic Evaluation Approach to Increasing the Value and Effect of Training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(1), 86-101.

to complete FOI questionnaires. We also asked universities who indicated that they had used the guidance to provide more in-depth data in the form of a structured case study survey.

We used a research approach known as impact evaluation². This enabled us to explore both the way that the Guidance Project (intervention) was delivered and the extent to which it worked as intended.

1.4 Key findings

The project's multifaceted dissemination strategy was found to be highly successful, with 58.2% of universities reporting that they were aware of and had read the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities document. Among those who had read the guidance, the impact on university policy making, training, and communications, was found to be high.

- **Impact on policy: 36.5% had used the guidance to create new or update existing policy.**
- **Impact on training: 29.4% had used the guidance to create new training.**
- **Impact on communications: 38.8% had used the guidance to issue domestic abuse communications.**

Additionally, of the universities who were not aware of the guidance prior to this evaluation, 95.9% expressed that they now intend to or may use it in the future.

1.5 Conclusions

Overall, the Guidance Project outputs have proved to be successful in guiding university policymakers and student wellbeing teams to develop inclusive domestic abuse support, including policies, training, and communications to safeguard staff and students.

² An impact evaluation provides information about the observed changes or 'impacts' produced by an intervention.

1.6 Key recommendations

Actions

- 1) The evaluation findings should be used to inform the roll-out of similar programmes and disseminated widely to share learning, encourage debate and further use of Guidance Project outputs.
- 2) HARM network should consider contacting the universities who have used the Guidance Project outputs to create/update policies, training or communications to encourage them to evaluate their programmes, with findings, learning, and good practice shared with stakeholders.

Best practice

- 3) Establishing the needs of stakeholders using a rapid evidence review should be considered best practice.
- 4) The participatory approach of engaging a diverse panel of key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Project should be considered best practice.
- 5) The innovative use of FOI requests as a method of collecting a potentially unique dataset should be considered good practice.
- 6) The 'step-by-step guide' format of the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities document should be considered good practice for the development of similar programmes.
- 7) The projects multifaceted dissemination strategy should be considered best practice.

2. Introduction

2.1 Establishment of Guidance Project

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), year ending March 2020, found that an estimated 1.6 million women and 757,000 men experienced domestic abuse in the last year. In the context of higher education, the CSEW revealed that full-time students were the most at-risk group, in occupational terms, where 10.5% of females and 4.8% of males had experienced domestic abuse in the last year. Additionally, staff and students with a disability were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse³.

To gauge the extent of the problem in terms of the number of staff and students affected, HARM network calculated estimates using the Crime Survey data for 2020 and UK staff and student numbers statistics for 2019/2020. They found that an estimated 162,073 students and 23,760 university staff experience domestic abuse annually.

In response to these prevalence estimates, in January 2021, HARM network conducted a rapid review to evaluate the extent of domestic abuse policies at universities across the UK⁴. Their research found that just 9 out of 133 universities had a specific domestic abuse policy, with a further 18 having a combined policy that covered domestic abuse alongside other related issues (e.g., sexual violence and harassment). Of the remaining universities, 27 mentioned domestic abuse in more general safeguarding policy. 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 provided 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.

³ Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2020). Domestic Abuse in England and Wales: Year Ending March 2020.

⁴ Hall, B., Roberts, A. & Khan, R. (2021). Rapid Review of Domestic Abuse Policies and Guidance Across UK Universities. Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire, UK. [Access](#)

This highlighted a clear need to raise awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities, and for a comprehensive 'how to' guide to help university policymakers to develop inclusive domestic abuse policies to better support and safeguard their staff and students.

Responding to this need, HARM network produced the [Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities](#) guidance document, which aims at raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities and guiding university policymakers in the development and implementation of domestic abuse policies.

The objectives of the Guidance Project outputs are to prompt universities to develop new policies or update existing policies, training and communications, and to encourage understanding of the issues facing victims of domestic abuse so that universities can provide a safer and improved response based on the needs of their diverse student-staff communities.

To meet the aims and objectives of the Project, HARM network drew on the knowledge of a diverse panel of academics and practitioners, renowned for their expertise in the domestic abuse and/or higher education sector, to inform the content of the guidance and to provide feedback on the final outputs.

The project's multifaceted dissemination strategy included email, social media, press campaigns, workshops, and conference presentations, aimed at ensuring that universities were aware of the guidance and acted on the recommendations made therein.

The Project was managed by Dr Roxanne Khan, HARM network, University of Central Lancashire, and funded by Research England (QR-SPF) in the amount of £14,225.

2.2 Evaluation aims and approach

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the Guidance Project outputs impacted on UK university domestic abuse policymaking, training, and communications. In line with the evaluation objective, the evaluation team used

HARM's Theory of Change (see Appendix A) as a starting point. In this Theory of Change, HARM's activities aimed at raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities and guiding university policymakers in the development and implementation of domestic abuse policies. These outputs aimed to promote the adoption and use of the guidance, leading to changes in policy and practice, for the ultimate benefit of university staff and students.

HARM holds itself accountable primarily for the generation of these impacts in the short-medium-term outcome arena, and it is this arena that was the focus of the evaluation.

The evaluation is consistent with UCLan's REF2028 strategy in terms of providing real-world research and innovation, producing research that reflects originality, significance, and rigour, that has a demonstrable impact on society. The evaluation findings will be used to evidence real-world impact for HARM's case study for REF2028.

The overarching aims of this evaluation were:

- To determine the extent to which the Guidance Project outputs impacted on UK university domestic abuse policymaking, training, and communications.

The Guidance Project impact evaluation adopted a broadly Success Case Method (Brinkerhoff, 2003). This approach focused on examining 1) what actually occurred, 2) whether it had an impact, expected or unexpected, and 3) what links exist between the intervention and its observed impacts.

The evaluation addressed the following key evaluation questions (KEQs):

Process

- a) What are the underlying assumptions of the project?
- b) How was the project implemented? Was the project implemented correctly?
- c) Is the target population being reached as intended?
- d) What has been done in an innovative way within the project?

Impact

- e) How well did the project work?
- f) Did the project produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short and medium term?
- g) For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances?
- h) What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) occurred?
- i) To what extent can changes observed be attributed to the project?
- j) What were the particular features of the project and/or context that made a difference?
- k) What was the influence of other factors on the project?

Efficiency

- l) Is the cost of the activities reasonable in relation to the benefits?
- m) Has the project been cost-effective (compared to alternative approaches)?
- n) Is the project the best use of available resources?

Evaluation Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix B.

2.3 Structure of this report

This report sets out the findings of the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities evaluation. We present our findings following the guidance dissemination to all UK universities in 2021.

3. Methodology and research methods

The impact evaluation adopted a broadly Success Case Method (Brinkerhoff, 2003). The data collected was used to find the outliers - cases where the intervention has been particularly successful or unsuccessful - to study them in more detail. This approach focused on examining 1) what actually occurred, 2) whether it had an impact, expected or unexpected, and 3) what links exist between the intervention and its observed impacts.

3.1 Quantitative data collection

The data collection tools were designed to ensure they were brief and appropriate. Between March and April 2023, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests,⁵ developed by the authors, were sent to 126 public universities in the UK via email or electronic submission forms (see Appendix C. Evaluation Survey). We input data from the quantitative evaluation surveys electronically into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis, following editing and data cleaning.

3.2 Qualitative data collection

We collected case study data through semi-structured email surveys (see Appendix D. Case Study Survey). Participants were selected based on success cases identified during analysis of the quantitative evaluation surveys. We input the data electronically into MS Word for analysis following data cleaning.

3.3 Ethics approval

Ethical approval for the Guidance Project evaluation study was provided by the University of Central Lancashire in January 2023.

⁵ Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA 2000) and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA 2002), members of the public have the right to request recorded information from public authorities. Public authorities must provide a response to requests within 20 working days, although they may refuse to provide information in specific circumstances (FOIA 2000; FOISA 2002).

4. Key findings

This section sets out the key findings of the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities evaluation.

4.1 Impact of Guidance Project outputs on UK universities

Key evaluation findings are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Key Evaluation Findings		
Awareness of guidance document	No.	%
Universities aware of guidance document	53	58.2
Impact of guidance document on policy and guidance	No.	%
Universities who provided a response to this question	52	98.1
Universities who reported impact on policy	19	36.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities who created new policy Universities who updated existing policy 	8	18.2 ⁶
	11	21.2
Universities who created new guidance	3	5.8
Impact of guidance document on training	No.	%
Universities who provided a response to this question	49	92.5
Universities who created new training	10	29.4 ⁷
Impact of guidance document on communications	No.	%
Universities who provided a response to this question	49	92.5
Universities who issued domestic abuse communications	19	38.8
Impact of guidance document in future	No.	%
Universities who provided a response to this question	49 ⁸	92.5
Universities who intend to use the guidance in future	12	24.5
Universities who may use the guidance in future	35	71.4

⁶ Excludes 8 universities who answered that they already had a policy in place.

⁷ Excludes 15 universities who answered that they already had training in place.

⁸ Universities who answered that they had not used or were not aware of the guidance prior to the FOI request.

Of the 126 FOI requests sent to UK universities, 90 provided a full response, and 2 provided a partial response. 1 partial response was excluded from the dataset due to relevant data being missing. 17 universities stated that the requested information was not held, and 4 refused the request. This gives an overall response rate of 89.7% and a full response rate (i.e., all requested information was provided) of 71.4%.

Awareness

Of the 91 universities who provided the requested information, 53 (58.2%) stated that staff from their human resources department, Vice-Chancellors, policy teams or equivalent were aware of and had read the guidance. Some specified who had read the guidance. This included: Human Resources, Senior HR Equality Officer, Student Conduct Office, Student Support, and Student Wellbeing Services. All 38 (41.8%) universities who said they had not read the guidance stated that they were not aware of the guidance prior to receiving the FOI request. A small number of universities provided separate responses from different departments which suggested that while departments responsible for university staff (e.g., human resources) had read the guidance, departments responsible for students had not, or vice versa.

Impact on policy

Universities who created new domestic abuse policy

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Edge Hill University
- Loughborough University
- The Open University
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Lincoln
- University of Winchester
- University of Worcester

Universities who updated existing policy

- Aston University
- Bournemouth University
- Cardiff University
- Kingston University
- Northumbria University
- Royal Agricultural University
- University of Bath
- University of Kent
- University of South Wales
- University of Warwick
- University of Wolverhampton

Of the 52 universities who provided the requested information, 19 (36.5%) stated that the guidance had had an impact on their policy. Specifically, 8 (18.2%)⁹ had used and/or been prompted by the guidance to create a new policy, and 11 (21.2%) had used the guidance to update their existing policy.

Additionally, 3 (5.8%) universities stated that they had used the guidance to create new domestic abuse guidance for staff and/or students.

Of the universities who had created new or updated existing policy/guidance, 45% said that this was for both staff and students, 35% for staff only, and 20% for students only. 28.6% of these universities stated that the policy/guidance was publicly available on their website.

8 (15.4%) universities did not use the guidance due to already having a policy in place, and a further 22 (42.3%) did not use the guidance for other reasons (e.g., they were already in the process of updating/creating policy when the guidance was published, or intended to use it in the future).

⁹ Percentage calculation excludes 8 universities who answered that they already had a policy in place.

Of the universities who were aware of the guidance, but did not currently have a domestic abuse policy, 11.4% stated that they intended to use the guidance to create a domestic abuse policy in the future, and 31.8% said that they may consider using the guidance for this purpose in the future. Additionally, of the universities who were not aware of the guidance, 28.9% said that they intended to use the guidance to create a new policy in the future.

Impact on training

Of the 49 universities that provided a full response, 10 (20.4%) used or were prompted by the guidance document to train staff and/or students around the issue of domestic abuse, 15 (30.6%) stated they already had training in place, and 24 (49%) were not prompted to train staff or students, for other reasons.

For those that were prompted to train their staff and/or students, 75% were prompted to train staff, 12.5% were prompted to train students and 12.5% trained both staff and students.

Of the universities that provided training for staff and/or students, 12.5% advertised this training publicly on their university website whereas 87.5% did not. 1 university stated that the training will be advertised when it is due to begin, and 2 universities stated that the reason for not advertising the training was that training for staff is only advertised internally so it will not be posted on the university website. The remaining universities did not provide a reason and responded with 'n/a'.

Of the universities that did not offer domestic abuse training, 13.3% intended to use the guidance to create training or instruct an external provider in the future, 26.7% answered 'maybe', 4.4% did not intend to use the guidance to create training, and 55.6% answered 'n/a'.

Impact on communications

19 (38.8%) universities stated that they had used or had been prompted by the guidance to issue communications to staff or students around the issue of domestic abuse. 30 (61.2%) stated that they did not use or were not prompted by the guidance.

Of the universities that did not use and were not prompted by the guidance initially, 28.6% stated that they now intend to use the guidance to inform the development of communications in the future, 3.6% did not, and 67.9% answered 'maybe'.

Impact of guidance in future

Of the universities who were not previously aware of the guidance, 12 (24.5%) expressed that they now intend to use it in the future, 35 (71.4%) answered 'maybe', and 2 (4.1%) did not intend to use it in the future.

Of the universities that did intend to use this guidance in the future, 84.6% reported that they would use it to inform domestic abuse policy, 57.1% to inform domestic abuse training, and 42.9% to inform domestic abuse communications.

4.2 Impact case studies

Case Study Surveys were sent to 26 UK universities, based on their responses to the FOI Evaluation Survey. The 4 universities who provided a response are detailed below.

During our evaluation exercise, we saw examples of good practice that indicate that Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities is having a positive impact on policy, training, and communications.

Contents

- A. Anglia Ruskin University
- B. Liverpool John Moore's University
- C. University of Central Lancashire
- D. University of Lincoln



A. Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)

[Anglia Ruskin University](#) is a public university located in East Anglia, United Kingdom. Founded in 1992, it has since expanded to include four campuses in Cambridge, Chelmsford, Peterborough, and London. The University has a diverse student population of more than 35,000 students from over 185 countries and approximately 2,000 staff. ARU is named as one of the top 40 universities in the UK in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023.

This impact case study shows how HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has been central to the development of University policy, a domestic abuse working group, and a programme of research, training and awareness raising activity at ARU.

Impact in more detail

Suzanne Drieu, Head of Counselling and Wellbeing, and David Walmsley, Deputy Director of Student Services, explain that ARU's Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service receives regular disclosures of domestic abuse and that they have always responded pro-actively by offering counselling, advocacy, academic support, financial hardship grants and emergency accommodation on an ad hoc basis. ARU has substantial domestic abuse expertise within the service with 2 staff experienced at completing CAADA-DASH risk assessments, referring to a MARAC and working closely with external specialist agencies to safeguard their students. Their relatively new Staff Counselling Service is now also receiving disclosures of domestic abuse and they are seeking to extend the support they offer by collaborating with HR colleagues.

How the guidance has been used to inform University policy

HARM's guidance has provided the context to allow ARU to address the constraints as well as the areas of good practice indicated above to develop a draft policy and guidance which, when approved, will offer comprehensive, sustainable, inclusive, and properly resourced support and protection for all members of ARU's community.

This guidance was instrumental in the creation of a Domestic Abuse working group with membership from across ARU's academic and professional services, including staff who have experienced the impact of domestic abuse in their professional lives and share a commitment to bring this policy into existence.

It helped to secure funding for a cross-University research team to complete two pieces of internal research to support development of their policy:

- a) an analysis by volume, and demographic breakdown of the different routes by which ARU students seek to report and seek support for domestic abuse;
- b) a staff focus group designed to help assess how well ARU are resourcing, targeting, and communicating these sources of support, and how well they are supporting staff in student-facing roles in their work with victims and survivors.

This research indicated, *inter alia*, that numbers of female students with disabilities reporting domestic abuse were unrepresentatively high, as were those from bisexual students. The emphasis on intersectionality in the guidance added further clarity to the planning included in the draft policy to ensure that ARU resource the emotional support, profile-raising and additional training needs of their staff to meet the range of experiences of domestic abuse their students report.

ARU are currently working closely with members of the University Executive Team and HR colleagues to ensure a joint staff-student domestic abuse policy is fully realised and supported by appropriate resource.

The use of this guidance has allowed ARU to bring together the existing good practice across the University, to begin to formalise a more cohesive and collaborative way of

offering support to victims/survivors and to increase the awareness of the severity and complexity of domestic abuse.

How the guidance has been used to inform training

Since January 2023, ARU has been working closely with Women's Aid to offer a specific training to their staff and students. The 'Ask Me' project is currently being offered for ARU staff and students with the aim to create a domestic abuse-aware community.

With the launch of the policy, ARU will be offering internal training for all staff that will include briefings on the policy and on how to respond to disclosures of domestic abuse at the University.

In the new academic year (September 2023), ARU will be recruiting students to join their action group as domestic abuse consultants to ensure the student voice is heard alongside staff.

Research will continue in this area across ARU and will be published on their dedicated sites.

How the guidance has been used to inform communications

When the policy is published, it will be supported by dedicated sites on both staff and student-facing intranet which will include the policy, guidance, research, and links to both internal support and external specialist agencies.

Conclusion

Within a short space of time, ARU have used the guidance to establish a domestic abuse working group, develop specific training for staff and students, and to secure funding for a cross-University research team to complete two pieces of internal research to support development of an inclusive domestic abuse policy. As a result, awareness of domestic abuse and the safety of ARU's staff and students will be enhanced.



B. Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)

[Liverpool John Moores University](#) is a public research university in the city of Liverpool, England. With a student/staff population of over 30,000, and a heritage that stretches back to 1823, LJMU is now one of the largest and well-established universities in the UK.

This impact case study shows how HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has been instrumental to the development of a stand-alone University policy, Workplace Domestic Abuse Champions, commissioning of independent training, and communications and awareness raising activity at LJMU.

Impact in more detail

Moni Akinsanya, Associate Director, Diversity and Inclusion, explains that HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities assisted LJMU to translate their former guidance document to a formal domestic abuse policy. The new policy is targeted at both staff and students and includes a step-by-step guide on what to do if someone is experiencing domestic abuse. The new policy was approved via the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC) and has been added to LJMU's Policy Centre. In addition to the roles the University HR Business Partners, Student Advice and Wellbeing department, Managers, and the Diversity and Inclusion Team play in this regard, LJMU also now have Workplace Domestic Abuse Champions who have undertaken training in victim support delivered by Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner. They also provide a dedicated email address that people can use to seek confidential support or advice.

How the guidance has been used to inform training

Responding to HARM's guidance recommendations, LJMU instructed [onEvidence](#) to deliver culturally competent and inclusive [domestic abuse training sessions](#) to the University community. They have also invited Emily Spurrell, Merseyside's Police and Crime Commissioner, to speak at LJMU on domestic abuse work in the City of Liverpool and how people can be supported.

How the guidance has been used to inform communications

LJMU used HARM's guidance to inform communications and [awareness raising campaigns](#) aimed at the University community. These have been made available via University web pages and [News Bulletins](#).

Conclusion

Using HARM's guidance, LJMU has developed a stand-alone domestic abuse policy, instructed independent specialists to deliver inclusive training, and embarked on a sustained communications campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support available to victims.



C. University of Central Lancashire

The [University of Central Lancashire](#) (UCLan) is a public university based in the city of Preston, Lancashire, England. Founded in 1828 as the Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge, UCLan is now a global, multi-campus university with sites in Preston (main), Burnley, Cumbria, and Cyprus. Home to a vibrant student-staff community of around 38,000, with 2,000 international students among them, UCLan is one of the UK's largest universities offering 400 undergraduate and over 200 postgraduate courses across 20 academic schools.

This impact case study shows how HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has provided UCLan with the tools to take their existing Respect & Dignity Policy and begin a conversation about how this is implemented and what it infers for their staff and student population, particularly in its everyday application of supporting formal and informal disclosures of domestic abuse.

Impact in more detail

Geraldine Dickinson, Senior Welfare Advisor, and Louise Noblett, Safeguarding Lead, explain that the University also took this opportunity to widen their scope in recognition of sector developments in the areas of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment, enabling them to capture the overlap between all three areas and develop a suite of policies and procedures reflective of the needs of their student-staff community as recognised in the guidance document.

In addition, the guidance also galvanised their existing agenda in this area, and supplemented discussions taking place at their Sexual Violence, Domestic Abuse and Harassment Steering Group (SVDAH), established in response to the Office for Students Statement of Expectations. The guidance, embedded in the Terms of

Reference, underpinned the approach of a positive and inclusive reporting culture, early intervention, and support & response frameworks. Further to their policy review, positive work continues to take place across key services to ensure their support and response is trauma informed and risk evaluated, with the inclusion of a multi-disciplinary collaboration meeting, at the centre of which risk and support is considered for both the reporting and responding parties.

In response to the barriers and impact victims face, UCLan undertook a thorough review of their Report & Support platform, launched their first ever targeted SVDAH campaign, updated their 'Tell us once' Privacy Notice to mitigate re-traumatisation of disclosure, and invited external specialist domestic violence services to work on campus so support could be offered in a safe environment.

How the guidance has been used to inform training

The guidance complements a suite of training already in place, inclusive of Safeguarding levels 1-3 and the sector-wide approved Sexual Violence Liaison Officer model. In addition, key staff across the University have undertaken, or are undertaking the following training:

- Risk Assessment model – student disciplinary trauma informed staff
- First Responder Training
- Police response role in domestic violence cases
- Halo Project – Peer led Programme
- Domestic violence Risk Identification Checklist (RIC) tool training
- Trauma informed training
- Financial abuse training – domestic violence impact included
- “Bet you Can” – level two gambling training with domestic violence included
- Non-Fatal strangulation and the Domestic Abuse Act
- Sexual Misconduct Risk and Needs Tool Workshop

How the guidance has been used to inform communications

The guidance has aided UCLan's first targeted campaign centered on domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harassment. The "When it feels wrong" campaign has been shown across all three UK campuses and sits alongside existing assets such as their Report & Support site, staff and student toolkits, Students' Union campaigns, Ask Angela initiative, Safezone awareness and promotional literature. These communications strive to promote and encourage a positive reporting culture across the whole university community.

Conclusion

The guidance has increased UCLan's awareness of the types of domestic abuse that their staff and students suffer, and improved their understanding of the barriers that victims face. This has fed into a review of their existing Respect & Dignity Policy, training offer, and communications to ensure that they are inclusive, culturally competent, and based on the needs of victims.



D. University of Lincoln

The [University of Lincoln](#) is a public research university in Lincoln, England, with origins dating back to 1861. The University has around 18,000 full- and part-time students and 2,300 staff.

This impact case study shows how HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has enabled the University of Lincoln to:

- a) Devise a stand-alone Domestic Abuse Policy based on a whole university approach (which is currently in draft form)
- b) Develop a comprehensive domestic abuse training course
- c) Develop clear and accessible communications

Impact in more detail

Carrie Green, Senior Sexual and Domestic Abuse Advisor (Student Wellbeing Service), explains that the University of Lincoln's Sexual and Domestic Abuse Support (SDAS) Service is based at Student Wellbeing. This includes a team of trained and accredited Sexual Violence Liaison Officers (SVLOs) who take disclosures of sexual misconduct and offer reporting and supporting options as part of this process. The team and support processes and procedures have been evolving since 2017, but the service became increasingly aware of growing numbers of students reporting domestic abuse and the challenges and changes needed to meet the need. There had been a significant increase of disclosures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and of online abuse and domestic abuse, which had quadrupled in volume.

How the guidance has been used to inform University policy

Before the HARM guidance was published, the University had implemented a Gender-Based Violence Policy, but this referred to domestic abuse only once in a more general

definition of what GBV is. A stand-alone Domestic Abuse Policy based on HARM's guidance - which calls for a whole university approach - has since been devised. The policy has clear and detailed definitions of all types of domestic abuse, and addresses barriers to reporting and disclosure, recognising signs of domestic abuse, and includes domestic abuse myths. The policy also includes guidance for staff on supporting students, pathways for receiving support from Professional Services, including the SDAS Service, and key contacts at the University.

As a result of considering recommendations from HARM's guidance and the increase of disclosures during COVID-19, the University of Lincoln have expanded the original Sexual Misconduct Support Team at Student Wellbeing to incorporate support and risk management for students experiencing domestic abuse during the academic year 2022-2023. This was possible following successfully securing funding from Lincolnshire's Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, as an acknowledgement of the work they undertake with students and the strength of their partnership working with victim services across Lincolnshire.

Since the beginning of the current academic year, the SDAS Service has received 116 disclosures of domestic abuse, either current or non-recent, and has been able to offer students reporting options for support, safety planning, safeguarding and risk assessment as required.

There are clear referral and escalation pathways in place both internally across the University and to external partners and support services. This clarity of process has improved support journeys for students and ensured staff across the University have clear parameters and boundaries, and increased consistency in approach and practice.

How the guidance has been used to inform training

The University of Lincoln's SDAS Service team have developed a comprehensive domestic abuse training course which has been reviewed in line with HARM's guidance. This training covers barriers to reporting and disclosure, recognising signs of domestic abuse, and challenging domestic abuse myths. This training is delivered

to staff who work closely with students at Student Wellbeing. Training is also delivered on Honor Based Abuse (HBA).

The University delivers Safeguarding and Dealing with Students in Distress training which is mandatory for all staff to attend across all departments including academics. This has been updated to incorporate domestic abuse, HBA and other forms of abuse including stalking and harassment.

How the guidance has been used to inform communications

The SDAS Service team have developed their own [Instagram](#) following student feedback and HARM's guidance recommendations to ensure clear communication to students in a format that is accessible and acceptable to them. The Instagram page addresses all areas of abuse and, regarding domestic abuse specifically, includes topic themes such as, 'What is domestic abuse?', recognising signs of domestic abuse, and understanding coercive control. The Student Services website and the SDAS Service [webpages](#) have been updated to include more information on domestic abuse.

The SDAS Service introduced a new campaign [#elephantintheroom](#) (which is evolving as a university-wide campaign to take forward throughout the academic year) to raise awareness of reporting, supporting and recognising signs, dispelling myths and talking about domestic abuse (and sexual misconduct). The intention is that [#elephantintheroom](#) will be a constant campaign theme throughout the academic year 2023-24. The SDAS Service also amended the existing online sexual misconduct reporting tool to include domestic abuse and stalking.

Conclusion

Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has prompted the University of Lincoln to devise a stand-alone policy, develop a comprehensive training offer, and guided their communications strategy. It has also increased awareness of the types of domestic abuse that their staff and students suffer, and improved their understanding of the barriers that victims face.

4.3 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The overarching aims of this evaluation were to determine the extent to which the Guidance Project outputs impacted on UK university domestic abuse policymaking, training, and communications.

Overall, the Guidance Project outputs have proved to be successful in guiding university policymakers and student wellbeing teams to develop inclusive domestic abuse support, including policies, training, and communications to safeguard staff and students. This is particularly encouraging given that the background to the development of the Guidance Project was a recognition that current support did not meet the needs of staff and students, which could lead them to feel vulnerable or at risk.

A key strength of the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities is its flexibility to be tailored to the individual university, resulting in being appropriate to the needs of a wide range of staff and students experiencing domestic abuse who present with a range of different characteristics and life circumstances.

The Guidance Project's multifaceted dissemination strategy proved to be effective in reaching university decision-makers and prompting them to take the appropriate action.

Looking forward, it is uncertain whether the Guidance Project outputs will reduce the number of staff and students experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse. However, it does provide universities with guidance and that, coupled with the enhanced awareness of the problem, may help to improve university responses to domestic abuse, and ease the emotional distress of victims.

Recommendations

Key recommendations based on our findings are set out below.

Actions

- 1) The evaluation findings should be used to inform the roll-out of similar programmes and disseminated widely to share learning, encourage debate and further use of Guidance Project outputs.
- 2) HARM network should consider contacting the universities who have used the Guidance Project outputs to create/update policies, training or communications to encourage them to evaluate their programmes, with findings, learning, and good practice shared with stakeholders.

Best practice

- 3) Establishing the needs of stakeholders using a rapid evidence review should be considered best practice.

This provided HARM network with up-to-date information about the prevalence of domestic abuse policy in UK universities, highlighting the current policy and practice gaps ahead of the development of the Guidance Project.

- 4) The participatory approach of engaging a diverse panel of key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Project should be considered best practice.

In adopting this participatory approach, the project team gained authentic cultural and contextual insights and the implications of these for the project design and guidance recommendations, which was particularly important given the multifactorial nature of issues facing victims of domestic abuse at UK universities.

- 5) The innovative use of FOI requests as a method of collecting a potentially unique dataset should be considered good practice.

This underused (by social scientists) method is highly accessible and has significant capacity to generate new research data across the social sciences. For example, reflecting on the success of this evaluation project, it may have been beneficial for HARM network to have used FOI requests as a method, rather than voluntary questionnaires, for the Rapid Evidence Review. The possible advantage is evidenced in the 89.7% response rate to the FOI requests made as part of this evaluation, compared to just 13% for the Rapid Evidence Review questionnaires.

- 6) The 'step-by-step guide' format of the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities document should be considered good practice for the development of similar programmes.

This format, with clear sections for raising awareness, policy creation, and detailing how it should be structured and what it should contain, proved to be highly accessible to university policymakers and student wellbeing teams.

- 7) The projects multifaceted dissemination strategy should be considered best practice.








Despite the impact of COVID-19 on university resources, the dissemination strategy was found to be highly successful, with 58.2% of universities reporting that they were aware of and had read the Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities document. Details about the Project dissemination strategy can be obtained by contacting Dr Roxanne Khan at harmnetwork@uclan.ac.uk

Further research is recommended on the following:

- The longer-term impact of the Guidance Project outputs on UK university policymaking, training, and communications.
- Whether and how the Guidance Project outcomes might help reduce the number of staff and students experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse.
- Determining the most effective systems of help-seeking from victims, and identifying barriers to help-seeking specifically in universities.
- If, and how, the status of 'student' may intersect with other identity characteristics.
- The experiences and support needs of university members who are both staff and students (e.g., postgraduate students with teaching duties).

5. Appendices

Appendix A. Theory of Change

Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities THEORY OF CHANGE		
1. PROBLEM & CAUSE		Domestic abuse experienced by staff and students in UK universities. Lack of policies to address the issue and raise awareness.
2. NEED		Research by HARM network and onEvidence found that over 185,000 university staff and students suffer domestic abuse every year.
3. RESOURCES (inputs)		To address this need, UK universities must develop effective domestic abuse policies.
4. ACTIVITIES (outputs)		HARM network will produce Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities - a step-by-step guide to support policymakers.
5. IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES		Universities implement guidance and recommendations to develop effective domestic abuse policy.
6. MECHANISMS OF CHANGE		Universities will understand and consider the scale and impact of domestic abuse, the business case for policy, and ways to make it work.
7. OUTCOMES		Effective and inclusive policy to support staff and students who experience domestic abuse, and to reduce risk of offending behaviours.

Appendix B. Terms of Reference

Evaluation Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Guidance Project outputs aim at raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities and guiding university policymakers in the development and implementation of domestic abuse policies to safeguard and support students and staff. The objectives of the Guidance Project outputs are to prompt universities to develop new policies or update existing policies, training, and communications, and to encourage understanding of the issues facing victims of domestic abuse so that universities can provide a safer and improved response based on the needs of their diverse student-staff communities.

The evaluation is consistent with UCLan's REF2028 strategy in terms of providing real-world research and innovation, producing research that reflects originality, significance, and rigour, that has a demonstrable impact on society. The evaluation findings will be used to evidence real-world impact for a planned HARM case study for REF2028.

The evaluation will be managed by Dr Roxanne Khan, HARM network, University of Central Lancashire, and funded by Research England (QR-SPF) in the amount of £7,800.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The objective of the evaluation will be to assess the extent to which the Guidance Project outputs impacted on UK university domestic abuse policymaking, training, and communications.

In line with the evaluation objective, the evaluation team will use HARMs Theory of Change (ToC) as a starting point. In this ToC, HARM's activities aimed at raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse at UK universities and guiding university policymakers in the development and implementation of domestic abuse policies. These outputs should promote the adoption and use of the guidance leading to changes in policy and practice, for the ultimate benefit of university staff and students. HARM holds itself accountable primarily for the generation of these impacts in the

short-medium-term outcome arena, and it is this arena that is the focus of the evaluation.

4. AUDIENCE

HARM network, University of Central Lancashire, is commissioning this evaluation exercise. Partners they would want to consider and act on the recommendations are UK university policymakers and student wellbeing teams, Office for Students, teaching and student unions.

The findings will be disseminated via:

- Distribution to all UK universities via national email campaign
- Dissemination workshop/presentation
- HARM network, UCLan, web page
- Social media campaign

5. SCOPE OF WORK

Dr Khan will work with evaluation team to design, develop and implement this evaluation project. The following key components are envisioned:

- Implementation of the evaluation project itself:** Dr Khan will manage and oversee the process of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting.
- Data analysis and reporting:** Dr Khan will produce a draft report, including recommendations, based on the analysis of the data in close consultation with the evaluation team.
- Data validation:** 1 2-hour validation workshop will be organised by Dr Khan to obtain feedback from relevant stakeholders. Dr Khan will be required to draft the agenda, develop the presentation, and present the findings. The feedback obtained will be used as key inputs for Dr Khan when writing the final report.
- Final report:** Dr Khan will be responsible for producing the final report, with contributions from the evaluation team.
- Report presentation:** Dr Khan will attend a 2-hour online stakeholder event organised by Centre for Criminal Justice Research & Partnerships to present the evaluation findings.

6. CONTRACT DURATION AND TIMELINE

Dr Khan should complete the assignment between February 2023 and July 2023. The timeline is elaborated in Table 1.

Table 1. Project Timeline*	
Month	Tasks
February - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting with evaluation team • Agree Terms of Reference (ToR) • Design of measures, processes, and outputs of the evaluation exercise • Ethics review and risk assessment • Materials and literature gathering • Design surveys
March - May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys • Data cleaning, analysis, and write up of survey and gathered materials data (Report Draft 1)
June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group consultation with evaluation team to discuss Report • Data cleaning and write up of consultation data • Preparation of draft Final Report • Evaluation team email feedback on draft Final Report
31 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report output

*Tasks and timeline are estimated and may be subject to change.

7. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Process

- a) What are the underlying assumptions of the project?
- b) How was the project implemented? Was the project implemented correctly?
- c) Is the target population being reached as intended?
- d) What has been done in an innovative way within the project?

Impact

- e) How well did the project work?
- f) Did the project produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short and medium term?
- g) For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances?
- h) What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) occurred?
- i) To what extent can changes observed be attributed to the project?
- j) What were the particular features of the project and/or context that made a difference?
- k) What was the influence of other factors on the project?

Efficiency

- l) Is the cost of the activities reasonable in relation to the benefits?
- m) Has the project been cost-effective (compared to alternative approaches)?
- n) Is the project the best use of available resources?

8. EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation team will adopt a mixed-method approach, combining the following elements:

- Desk review of key documents;
- Quantitative surveys;
- Qualitative case studies.

9. KEY DOCUMENTS AND PEOPLE TO BE CONSULTED

HARM network Theory of Change, key Project documents, Rapid Review of Domestic Abuse Policies and Guidance Across UK Universities, Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities, HARM web pages.

People consulted will include implementing and strategic partners, as well as university Wellbeing and HR Teams.

10. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will comprise of 3 Evaluation Coordinators from HARM, and 1 Evaluation Coordinator from onEvidence Ltd.

11. EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

a) The **evaluation report**, including a set of recommendations based on the insights and evidence gathered, will be an informative, jargon-free document that can be easily understood. It will be presented in a professional manner, in accordance with University of Central Lancashire identity guidelines and standards.

b) The **presentations** will be concise and follow University of Central Lancashire identity guidelines.

12. ETHICS AND RISK

Data collection methods will adhere to standard research ethics and be based on clear consent. The process and products will adhere to University of Central Lancashire guidelines and standards, and in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Appendix C. Evaluation Survey

With reference to [Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities](#), published by HARM network, University of Central Lancashire in 2021, and **distributed to all UK universities** via email.

On behalf of HARM network, UCLan, Dr Khan is writing to you to request information relating to domestic abuse policies, training, and communications at your university.

The purpose of this request is to inform a national evaluation research project, funded by Research England (QR SPF), to investigate the impact of HARM's Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK universities, 2021 (the intervention).

Specifically, we want to know how, if at all, this Guidance has been used by your university.

Please provide the following information via electronic copy to the above email within 20 working days of receiving this request:

AWARENESS OF THIS GUIDANCE

- 1. Have you, or your University HR colleagues, VC Group or Policy Team, read Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities?** Yes / No
- 2. If NO, were you, or your university HR colleagues, VC Group or Policy Team, aware of this Guidance prior to this email contact?** Yes /No

USE OF THIS GUIDANCE

If you answered NO to both questions 1 and 2, please skip to question 17.
If you answered YES to either questions 1 or 2, please complete the following:

POLICY

- 3. Has your university used, or been prompted by, this Guidance to create or update a Domestic Abuse Policy?**
 - Yes - we created new policy
 - Yes - we used it to update existing policy
 - No - we already had a policy in place
 - No - other
- 4. If YES, is this for**
 - Students
 - Staff

Both staff and students

5. Is this Policy publicly available on your university website?

Yes

No

N/A

6. If YES, please provide a link:

7. If NO, please tell us where you have made or intend to make this Policy available (e.g. intranet):

8. If your university does NOT have a Domestic Abuse Policy, do you intend to use this Guidance to create one in future?

Yes

No

Maybe

N/A

TRAINING

9. Has your University used, or been prompted by, this Guidance to train staff and/or students around the issue of domestic abuse?

Yes

No - we already trained our staff and/or students

No - other

10. If YES, is this for

Staff

Students

Both staff and students

11. Is this training advertised publicly on your University Website?

Yes

No

N/A

12. If YES, please provide a link:

13. If NO, please tell us where or how you have made or intend to make this training available (e.g. intranet):

14. If your university does NOT offer Domestic Abuse Training, do you intend to use this Guidance to create training internally or instruct an external provider in future?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- N/A

COMMUNICATIONS

15. Has your university used, or been prompted by, this Guidance to issue communications to staff or students around the issue of domestic abuse?

- Yes
- No

16. If NO, do you intend to use this Guidance to inform the development of any communications in future?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

USE OF THIS GUIDANCE IN FUTURE

Please only complete this section if you answered NO to both questions 1 and 2.

17. Now that you are aware of this Guidance, do you intend to use it in future?

- Yes - to inform Domestic Abuse Policy
- Yes - to inform Domestic Abuse Training
- Yes - to inform Domestic Abuse Communications
- Maybe - any/all of the above
- No

THANK YOU for taking the time to respond to this FOI request. The information you have provided will help us to better understand how Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities has impacted on the abilities of higher education providers to respond to domestic abuse to better support staff and students.

Appendix D. Case Study Survey

Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities

CASE STUDY

University:	
Contact name:	
Email:	
Date:	
Please complete the following: (Include as much detail as possible and any relevant links)	
1. Explain how this guidance has been used to inform University policy?	
2. Explain how this guidance has been used to inform training?	
3. Explain how this guidance has been used to inform communications? (e.g., posters, flyers, web page updates, social media).	
4. Provide examples of positive feedback received about actions your University has taken to safeguard staff and students from domestic abuse. (e.g., from students or staff, welfare teams, HR, Union).	
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	

Return to Dr Roxanne Khan rkhan2@uclan.ac.uk HARM network, University of Central Lancashire



This evaluation demonstrates the significant and positive impact that HARM network's guidance has had at a number of universities in transforming their practice to support both students and staff who have experienced domestic abuse. The work showcased in the university case studies is serious and impressive, particularly those who've taken a 'whole university' approach to tackle this issue; including training for specialist staff, new referral pathways to local services and partnerships forged with local police and crime commissioners.

Amy Norton, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Regulation Directorate, Office for Students



The ground-breaking HARM network have shone a light on domestic abuse amongst students and staff and what we can do as a sector to actively engage with encouraging reporting and directly supporting those who come forward. This evaluation study demonstrates the impact of the research in terms of changes to policy and practice across the university sector. And such changes have occurred within a very short time scale from the distribution of the guidance to the evaluation outlined, which surely bodes well for the future of our staff/ student communities.

Graham Towl, Professor of Forensic Psychology, Durham University

Enquiries

Dr Roxanne Khan

Honour Abuse Research Matrix

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