

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

1. Scope

- 1.1** The Council opposes domestic violence and abuse in all of its forms and recognises that it is a problem which can affect victims both physically and mentally.
- 1.2** The Council is committed to ensuring that all employees are provided with a safe working environment, in which risks to health and wellbeing are considered and dealt with effectively. As a responsible employer, the Council will support all employees who experience abuse, where the Council is aware of the abuse.

2. Definition

- 2.1** The government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to the following types:

- **psychological**
- **physical**
- **sexual**
- **financial**
- **emotional.**

- 2.2** All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power, coercion and control over other family members or intimate partners.
- 2.3** 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.
- 2.4** 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.
- 2.5** Forced marriage is also recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men. A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used.

3. Our Commitment

- 3.1** **The Council will support employees who experience abuse by:**

- i. Responding appropriately to any employee who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse or violence.
- ii. Offering access to the full provision of leave types for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- iii. Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns, if organisationally possible.
- iv. Changes to certain specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role.
- v. Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- vi. Offering access to existing provisions, for example Occupational Health and counselling services.

4. Advice for Employees

- 4.1 Domestic abuse is an issue that affects all sections of society, and there will be employees within the Council who have, or continue to experience domestic violence or abuse in their personal lives. As a responsible employer, the Council is committed to minimising the impact of domestic abuse.
- 4.2 If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you may wish to tell someone. A list of contact details of various dedicated local and national support agencies can be found within this Policy.
- 4.3 You are also encouraged to speak with your line manager if you are concerned about or are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers will not ask you for proof, they will be non-judgemental, take you seriously and take the time to listen.
- 4.4 If you prefer, you may wish to speak with a colleague or your Service HR Partner. Your line manager or Service HR Partner can, with your consent, arrange a referral to meet with the Council's Occupational Health nurse, who can advise you further about the counselling provision available.

5. Advice for Managers

- 5.1 If an employee approaches you for advice, make sure the conversation takes place in private. It may be appropriate to offer the option of speaking with someone from Human Resources, if that is more preferable to the employee. You may also wish to contact HR for advice on how to support the employee.
- 5.2 You may be the first person an employee has confided in and raising this issue will have taken a great deal of courage. The response the employee receives from you may be a crucial factor as to whether they seek further help and support.
- 5.3 You should ensure that you have formal consent from the employee if they request that you contact a support agency on their behalf.
- 5.4 The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development have jointly developed a list of ten actions that can be taken to help manage domestic abuse in the workplace.

5.5 The ten actions are:

Recognise the problem:

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

Respond:

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

Provide support:

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their (ex) partner telephones or visits the workplace.
7. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home.
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.
9. Ensure that there are domestic abuse helpline posters on noticeboards. Posters are available from HR.

Refer to the appropriate help:

10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse. A list of local and national support agencies can be found overleaf.

6. Support Agencies

- 6.1 Overleaf is a list of contact details of support agencies that an employee may wish to contact for further help and support.

7. Review

- 7.1 This Policy will be reviewed two years after implementation or earlier in the event of further changes in legislation

Document Control:

Version no.	Effective Date	Reason	Review due
1.0	02.02.2016	New policy to be considered by JCC and Personnel Committee	02.02.2018

Support Agency	Contact Details
Police (24 hours) – if it's an emergency or you are in immediate danger.	999
Neighbourhood Policing team – if it's not an emergency. Lancaster Police Station Thurnham Street Lancaster	01524 596649 Lancaster.NPT@lancashire.pnn.police.uk
National Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours) Offers help and support and safe, emergency and temporary accommodation or outreach services to women and children experiencing domestic violence.	0808 2000 247 www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
National Centre for Domestic Violence Provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to all survivors of domestic violence.	0800 970 2070 www.ncdv.org.uk
Broken Rainbow Broken Rainbow offers support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence.	0800 999 5428 http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/
Men's Advice Line Advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse.	0808 801 0327 www.mensadvice.org.uk
Refuge helpline (24 hours) Support for women and children including refuges.	0808 2000 247
The Samaritans (24 hours) For confidential help, support and safe emergency accommodation.	116 123 jo@samaritans.org
Empowerment (formerly Lancaster and District Women's Aid) For people affected by domestic abuse.	0300 32 32 100 (option 6) admin@empowermentcharity.org.uk