

# **Domestic Abuse Policy**

**Introduced: November 2021**

**Developed by: Public Health and Human Resources**

## Introduction

Tackling domestic abuse is a high priority for the Council and partners in Telford & Wrekin and as an organisation the Council is committed to supporting its employees' health and wellbeing at work.

We recognise that, unfortunately, some employees will be experiencing domestic abuse and that the current pandemic may have compounded this situation.

The Council has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to domestic abuse. Our aim, through this policy, is to provide a safe workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

The policy sets out how we will support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and how we will take action against employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Guidance Notes which are referred to throughout.

## Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all Council employees, except those employed in schools under Local Management of School provisions.

## Policy commitments

The Council is committed to:

- Protecting the safety and security of all employees at work, including those affected by domestic abuse and their colleagues
- Fostering a safe and supportive workplace culture where employees feel able to disclose difficult issues such as domestic abuse
- Raising awareness of this policy and the support that is available to employees experiencing domestic abuse
- Supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and ensuring that they are treated with dignity and respect
- Protecting confidentially, with the exception of cases where there is imminent threat to life, harm of children or vulnerable adults, or threat to other employees
- Ensuring that managers are equipped to support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and to signpost them to relevant organisations
- Providing [awareness training](#) to all employees on domestic abuse
- Investigating and where appropriate taking action against employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse, in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy

This policy recognises that:

- Whilst women are more likely to experience domestic abuse, this policy applies equally to men and women. It also applies in the case of employees who are affected by Child to Parent abuse.
- It is the responsibility of line managers to be familiar with the Domestic Abuse policy and to support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, non-judgmental way.
- It is the responsibility of Public Health, working in partnership with HR, Health & Safety and trade union representatives to ensure that employees are aware of the Domestic Abuse Policy and to monitor and review its effectiveness.
- It is the responsibility of Public Health, working in partnership with HR and Organisational Development, to ensure that appropriate awareness raising training is available for employees.
- It is the responsibility of all employees to support colleagues if they suspect they are experiencing abuse and to report colleagues if they suspect they are perpetrators of abuse.

## What is domestic abuse?

Domestic Abuse is defined as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- ⇒ psychological
- ⇒ physical
- ⇒ sexual
- ⇒ financial
- ⇒ emotional

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.” \*

Our broad 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.

***Please refer to guidance note 1 for information on what is meant by domestic abuse and Guidance Note 2 for information on the myths around domestic abuse.***

## What are the indicators of domestic abuse?

There can be many potential indicators of domestic abuse such as changes to work productivity, changes in behaviour and appearance and other physical indicators.

As an employer, we will ensure that our managers and employees are aware of how to recognise these potential indicators and what to do if an employee discloses, or if they suspect an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse.

***Please refer to Guidance Note 1 for more information on potential indicators of abuse and Guidance Note 3 for information on opening up the conversation around domestic abuse.***

## Sources of Support:

If an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, it is really important that they know that there are people within the organisation who can support them. This might be:

- Their line manager
- A trusted colleague
- The Employee Assistance Programme (where you can access confidential advice as well as counselling)
- Human Resources
- Occupational Health
- Health & Safety
- Trade Union Representatives

***More information on sources of support can be found in Guidance Note 4.***

### **Types of Support**

Once an employee has disclosed domestic abuse, a discussion will take place around the support options that are available. This may be in the form of practical support or by signposting to other internal, regional and national support services, charities and organisations who can provide help and advice.

***See Guidance Note 5 for details of the types of support available.***

### **Dealing with employees who are perpetrators of abuse**

The Council recognises that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator.

As such, an employee who is a perpetrator of domestic abuse will be subject to an investigation in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy, the potential outcome of which could include dismissal in cases of gross misconduct.

***See Guidance Note 6 for further information on Employees who are Perpetrators.***