



**POLICY ON RESPONDING TO EMPLOYEES
EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aim

- 1.1 Everyone has the right to a life free from abuse in any form. Domestic Abuse is wholly unacceptable and inexcusable behaviour. The Council strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that abuse against people is unacceptable.
- 1.2 Although incidents of domestic abuse may not be apparent in the workplace, the repercussions of domestic abuse in the home may well affect an employee when they are at work. The Council's aim is to support employees who experience domestic abuse.

Scope

- 1.3 This policy applies to all Council employees but can be adopted by Sutton Plan partner organisations.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. GENERAL

- 2.1 In the year ending March 2018, an estimated 2.0 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.3 million women, 695,000 men). A workplace culture which challenges domestic abuse in general, is part of making the workplace safer for those individual employees who are actually experiencing domestic abuse.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal obligations which underpin this policy include the duties within the Human Rights Act (1998), the European Convention on Human Rights to protect life and to protect individuals from inhumane and degrading treatment, and the Care Act 2015 which extends the categories of abuse to include domestic violence and abuse, demonstrating a recognition of the significance of Domestic violence and abuse and the impact on children of adults at risk.

- 2.2 Domestic abuse is usually hidden and its effects and costs are also hidden, and remain unidentified by most employers. While the individual is at risk of potential loss of income, promotion and job opportunities, there are also implications for the employer:
 - Decreased productivity.
 - Absenteeism.
 - Performance issues.
 - Increased employee turnover.

2.3 Examples of domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse can take different forms. It can be very frightening, and sometimes it is also very subtle. Some examples include:

- threats and intimidation - threatening to hurt you or members of your family
- physical abuse - hitting, shoving, kicking, strangling or slapping, hair pulling, throwing things, choking or smothering, even when it doesn't leave physical marks (and can be targeted to areas of the body which are usually covered)
- sexual abuse - performing sexual acts or having sex with you when you don't want to. This can include the use of threats, intimidation, coercive behaviour or physical force, although it is still sexual abuse even without using these
- insults by name calling or criticism of your appearance or identity
- criticism and put-downs
- forced isolation from your friends or family
- being blamed for every argument or problem, or for the violent behaviour
- humiliation at home or in public
- controlling behaviour - telling you what to do or wear, or using manipulation or coercion. Following you or checking up on your mobile phone, post or internet use, faking your social media account
- financial abuse - preventing you from getting or keeping a job, taking your money away or withholding the family income

2.4 The workplace can be a vital source of support for employees experiencing domestic abuse, and where support is offered in the workplace it can help people experiencing abuse to keep themselves safe. Whilst supporting staff at this difficult time is the most important reason, managers are required to consider the wider impact to manage or reduce stress, poor performance, or prolonged or repeated sick leave.

2.5 Anyone affected by domestic abuse, whether as a perpetrator or enduring abuse, is encouraged to seek support.

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Procedure effective from: April 2019

Date of next review: November 2021.

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE



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1. INTRODUCTION

Aim

- 1.1 This procedure is designed to guide Managers to support staff who are enduring domestic abuse, specifically when issues are brought to their attention in the workplace. It should be read in conjunction with the Policy on Responding to Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse, which is also intended to raise awareness of domestic abuse amongst all staff.

Scope

- 1.2 This procedure applies to all employees. It is intended to provide a framework for managers to support staff who are experiencing domestic abuse to receive the information and support they require and want.
- 1.3 All staff have a responsibility to be aware of this policy
- 1.4 This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. DOMESTIC ABUSE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

- 2.1 Managers should create a supportive culture within their team and be proactive in regard to the welfare of their employees.
- 2.2 Managers should be alert to warning signs that may arise when dealing with employees under Council procedures, such as Managing Sickness Absence effectively, Minimising Stress In the Workplace and Capability and Work Performance Procedures, and should be receptive to the possibility that domestic abuse may be part of the underlying problem.
- 2.3 Managers are required to know the referral pathways and to signpost staff to appropriate resources.

3. PRACTICAL STEPS

- 3.1 Managers should respond sensitively to information about domestic abuse . Managers should consider the following:
- Ensure privacy for any conversations about the issues - using an office or room where confidentiality is assured.
 - Refer them to www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk, a Council-provided website of information about domestic abuse, including practical information and who to go to for help and support

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- Be non-judgemental and patient – an employee experiencing domestic abuse may need time to decide what to do, and may try different short-term and long-term options during the process.
 - People are far more likely to disclose domestic abuse if you ask them a direct question - eg 'Is everything alright at home - are you experiencing domestic abuse?'
 - Respect the reasons why someone might be reluctant to leave an abusive partner or to report the abuse to the police. Unless there are safeguarding concerns, the manager must obtain the consent from the employee to contact the police or refer the matter.
 - Discuss ways to help the person stay safe at work and refer the person through the appropriate pathway at an early stage.
 - Offer the option of speaking to a Domestic Abuse Champion or another manager who may be more appropriate. An employee may wish to speak to a Manager of the same sex or ethnicity as themselves. Alternatively an employee experiencing domestic abuse may feel more comfortable talking to Human Resources or going through the Employee Assistance Programme, or contacting referral services directly (see final page for Transform domestic abuse services information).
 - Inform the employee that domestic abuse is a crime and they do not have to go on experiencing it. They can speak with an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser to support them in any decision that they wish to take.
 - Moving away from the perpetrator is likely to be the most dangerous time for the employee, and immediate colleagues may need to be alerted appropriately

3.2 Managers should consider how the employee may be supported in the following ways:

- Agree what to tell colleagues, including how they should respond if the other party telephones or calls at the workplace. Provide a photo and other information (e.g. car registration) about the perpetrator to help colleagues to be alert and supportive.
- Offer or allow a workplace colleague to accompany the employee to the police to report the abuse, or to a housing officer, solicitor, or domestic abuse service, if they choose any of these courses of action.
- Ensure that all employees are aware that personal information should not be given to anyone phoning or visiting the workplace – colleagues may know the partner or ex-partner, and perceive them as unthreatening and may forget the Council's processes on data protection.

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- Where the person experiencing domestic abuse is a woman, any home contact should be made by a female employee unless otherwise agreed.
 - Be mindful of the welfare of work colleagues. Fielding threatening or abusive phone calls can be distressing. Agree suitable arrangements within confidential boundaries, seek advice on conflict management from Human Resources.
 - Encourage employees to call Workplace Options (Employee Assistance Programme) on 0800 243 458 for confidential and independent advice, support and/or counselling (they are open 24 hours a day, every day).
 - Encouraging employees to call an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) on 07943083588 or 07961249320 – Monday – Friday 10am-6pm.

4. WHERE BOTH PARTIES WORK FOR THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 Managers are advised to signpost any disclosures from a perpetrator to local programmes that are built to support the process of change within abusers in order to protect their victims.
- 4.2 The conduct of the alleged perpetrator, who is an employee, may trigger disciplinary action. In such cases, managers are advised to contact Human Resources in respect of the process of managing allegations of Domestic Abuse . The Council’s policies and procedures will apply in respect of the conduct of the alleged perpetrator and if proven, would be in breach of the expected standards of behaviour expected of its employees. Careful consideration will also be given where the post requires a DBS clearance as this could have an impact on their continued and/or future employment.
- 4.3 Managers are advised to confine their consideration to the harassing conduct in the workplace and not attempt to address the relationship which has given rise to the misconduct. Informal action by way of a consensual resolution, such as mediation, should not be attempted within the workplace.

5. SAFEGUARDING

5.1 In the event of an employee, who is also a borough resident, disclosing they are experiencing domestic abuse and there are children involved within the family, the Manager has a duty to refer information onto the persons local Children’s Safeguarding Service, regardless of parental consent. This will involve a referral to the First Point of Contact service(if you work in Kingston) and the Children’s First Contact Service (if you work in Sutton) to enable a full risk assessment of the situation to be completed. The Manager has a duty to inform the safeguarding services in order to protect any children and or young people directly involved in the family as well as any children within the public’s best interest.

5.2 This information will also need to be shared with the Council's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (Service Manager for Children's Safeguarding Service) for a consultation, possibly leading to a decision to be made regarding a possible need for a Senior Strategy Meeting.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 6.1 Confidentiality should be respected unless there are safeguarding issues involved (see above) or the employee agrees there may be benefit from immediate colleagues and Managers knowing something of their situation.
- 6.2 Managers should remind employees who are aware of the situation, not to discuss the issue with other employees as this would be breaching confidence. Measures will be taken to protect an employees personal information, in the context of addressing the concerns.
- 6.3 It is vital that Council employees never disclose contact information to third parties. Employees should be reminded that those alleged to be committing domestic abuse may well get friends or relatives to try and access records. This may include the family of the employee concerned. Employees need to be aware that they cannot access records for personal reasons.
- 6.4 In the event that there are risks to children, fellow employees or the public, or the person experiencing domestic abuse has been threatened with death or imminent harm, the manager has a duty to review confidentiality on a case by case basis, but should seek expert advice as outlined in the flowchart.

7. TRAINING

It is required that staff access training at a level identified appropriate to their role and responsibilities. The Council will provide training at 2 levels: (a) a general awareness elearning module that will be mandatory for all staff and should be repeated every two years (b) new guidance for managers supported by briefing sessions following its launch.

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Procedure effective following consultation but likely to be February 2019.

Assessing Domestic Abuse Flowchart

Ask Questions if you suspect Domestic Abuse	
Document when and why you asked the questions and the response	
No disclosure - Accept Response	If safe discreetly offer or email www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk link or leaflet with advice and support to One Stop Shop / Outreach

Employee discloses or Potential Indicator of Domestic Abuse

Assess Risk
The manager/HR/colleague may have taken the disclosure. The Manager/HR to discuss ways to help the person stay safe at work. DA Champion or IDVA can be contacted. Based on the risks follow the appropriate pathway. This may need support from senior/specialist/safeguarding staff.
Explain limits of confidentiality and what actions the manager may have to consider Detailed risk and needs assessments will be undertaken by specialist agencies

Low/Medium Risk	
If safe discreetly offer or email www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk link or a leaflet for One Stop Shop/Outreach Services. Free advice and support is available, it's up to the employee what action, if any, they want to take If they are a borough resident, discreetly refer to Transform service with consent	Employee can also call the number on www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk or leaflet for support and advice at National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0800 2000 247

High Risk	
Is Immediate action required or if children/unborn babies are at risk? Contact Police on 999 and/or seek advice from Children Social Services to initiate child protection safeguarding procedures. The Manager/HR to record a safe method of communication for the victim to be contacted If they are a borough resident, discreetly refer to Transform service with consent	If safe, discreetly offer or email patient/client www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk link or leaflet for One Stop Shop/Outreach Services. Patient/client can also call the number on the leaflet for support and advice at National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0800 2000 247

What happens next?
If a victim is high risk the Transform service will contact the victim to offer support and practical support. The case may then be discussed at the next MARAC Conference where a range of agencies will share information and action plan to ensure safety and options for the victim and children, as well as a plan to manage the perpetrator effectively

SUTTON CONTACT DETAILS

One Stop Shop - Confidential drop-in

Every Wednesday: 9.30am-11.30am

Sutton Baptist Church, 21 Cheam Road, Sutton. SM1 1SN

TRANSFORM - Specialist local domestic abuse services

Tel: 020 8092 7569

Web: <https://www.cranstoun.org/services/domestic-abuse/transform-sutton/>

Email: transformsutton@cranstoun.org.uk

IDVA (Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor)

Charlotte Lunn IDVA – 07943 083588

Sharon Tucker IDVA – 07961 249320

MARAC

Adam French MARAC Coordinator - 020 8770 6709

adam.french@sutton.gov.uk

Domestic Abuse Champions contact details (LBS Employees):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4C3MrFIRTXVX0hWMXBzLWZobVZkUUtvM3Q0bHFEZG1OTkxJ/view?usp=sharing>

SUTTON POLICE (DA)

PC Charlie Smith

Sutton Police

CSU Telephone: 020 8649 0507

Email: charlie.d.smith@met.police.uk

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse and in need of **urgent assistance** can contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline on **0800 2000 247**.

Anyone who feels in immediate danger should call the police on 999.