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Dealing with Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Managers **Guidelines**

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

These Guidelines have been produced to assist managers in implementing the Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence Policy.

The Council recognises that Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence:

- Is unacceptable
- May have an impact on the workplace
- Can impinge on an employees work performance and ultimately on service provision.

Domestic Abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another and can take many different forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and financial abuse.

Domestic Abuse has a devastating impact on employees and their families, research shows that more than 20% of employed women in the UK take time off work due to domestic abuse and 2% of those lose their jobs as a direct result of experiencing domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse can impact within the workplace. Research shows that 56% of abused women arrive late for work at least five times a month, 28% leave early at least five days a month and 53% miss at least three days of work a month. Other impacts can include aggressive phone calls, physical assault or unannounced visits from abusive partners.

All employees who experience abuse should be supported regardless of gender and the type of abuse.

2. **HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE**

So – Called Honour Based Violence can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members.

Managers should be aware that, if an employee experiencing what may be honour based violence, has a family or community member as support then care should be taken to ensure that professional translators are available if their first language is being used to avoid the possibility of misunderstandings or pressure being put on the employee due to cultural reasons. If in doubt seek advice from an appropriate agency/organisation (see Section 5).

3. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence and abuse can be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding. Sexual assault covers any other sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, ranging from touching to any other activity if it is sexual.

4. THE FOUR R'S - RECOGNISE, RESPOND, REFER, RECORD

4.1 Recognise - Signs and Symptoms

It is unlikely, in the first instance, that employees who experience Domestic Abuse will inform colleagues of their situation, or approach their manager with problems. It is far more likely that the manager will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as sickness absence monitoring or poor performance. As with other welfare issues, identifying an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered, and allow that employee to deal with their situation far more effectively.

Initial signs and symptoms that an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse include sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work produced for unexplained reasons. Other examples include:

- frequent sickness absence
- under performance
- being late for work
- leaving work early
- receiving phone calls that appear to upset
- lack of concentration or increased tiredness
- being anxious in work
- receiving excessive text messages
- wearing clothes that cover up physical signs such as long sleeves in very hot weather.

The Welsh Government 10,000 Safer Lives Project Report includes further information in respect of the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse and can be accessed at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dpsp/policy/12062010ksaferlivesrepenv1.pdf>

4.2 Respond - Asking difficult Questions

If an employee discloses domestic abuse it is vitally important that the matter is dealt with sensitively and that the employee is reassured that the Council understands how domestic abuse may impact in work and that there are support mechanisms in place to assist the employee.

There may be occasions however where a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse and will need to facilitate a conversation to be able to discuss the matter and identify appropriate support.

Managers should ask indirect questions that develop empathy and encourage the employee to respond.

Examples include:

- How are you at the moment? Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
- I have noticed recently that you don't appear to be yourself is anything the matter?
- Is everything alright at work?
- Is everything alright at home?
- Are there any problems or reason that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence/under performance at work?
- Are you being looked after properly?
- Are you getting on alright with your partner at the moment?

4.3 Refer - Support and Referral

If a situation of domestic abuse is identified, then it is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment. The role of the manager is not to deal with the abuse but to make it clear through use of the workplace policy that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.

A manager **MUST** respect the employees' boundaries and privacy and can only advise the employee of the support available. The employee must be allowed to make their own decisions in respect of what, if any, support they want or need. However, a manager may, with the consent of the employee, make the first contact with an organisation on behalf of the employee.

The only exception to this is if the manager feels there is a safeguarding issue in respect of vulnerable children or adults. In this case the manager should seek advice from the appropriate Council Safeguarding Team.

Examples of practical support in the workplace include:

- Use existing policies to allow the employee to change work patterns or workload and allow flexible or more flexible working or special leave to facilitate practical arrangements
- Divert phone calls and messages
- Alert reception and security staff if the abuser is known to come to the workplace and provide them with a copy of any existing orders against the abuser and a photograph
- Check that employees have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser telephones or visits the workplace
- Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace
- Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
- Advise employee of the Domestic Abuse Link Staff who can offer support (See section 10 of the accompanying Policy).

This list is not exhaustive and there may be additional/alternative support measures needed depending on individual circumstances and wishes.

The employee should be given information in respect of support agencies/organisations that may be able to assist.

If the employee agrees, a manager may refer them to an appropriate agency/organisation, or, with their agreement or at their request make the first contact on their behalf.

4.4 Record

It is important that a record is kept of any incidents of abuse that occur in the workplace. This includes persistent telephone calls, e mails or visits to the employee by their partner/ex partner.

All information should be recorded taking into account the need for confidentiality, legal requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Council's Information Security Policy. Managers must ensure that such sensitive and confidential information can only be accessed in line with these procedures.

5. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Managers are responsible for ensuring information is not disclosed and that all employees are aware of their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality.

It is important to realise that failure to prioritise confidentiality can put employees in danger. The only exception is where there are concerns about the safety of vulnerable children or adults; in this case the manager should contact the appropriate Council Safeguarding Team for advice.

6. **SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS:**

There are a number of organisations that can provide advice and support to both managers, to assist them in dealing with an employee experiencing domestic abuse, and the employee. These include:

Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator

Pontypridd Safety Unit (Independent Domestic Violence Adviser Service)

Gwalia Care and Support (Domestic Abuse Drop-in Service)

(Both services are non-gender specific)

All located at:

The Oasis Centre
Upper Church Street
Pontypridd
CF37 2UF

Tel: (01443) 494190/494192

E-mail: PontypriddSafetyUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk
www.famouspeoplert.co.uk

Child Protection- Rhondda Cynon Taff

Rhondda: 01443 431513

Cynon: 01685 888800

Taff Ely: 01443 486731

For all the above teams Email: csiathondda@rctcbc.gov.uk

Emergency Duty Team 01443 849944
(5.00pm - 8.30am Mon to Thu, 4.30pm - 8.30am Fri to Mon)

Local Safeguarding Children Board: 01443 490400

Child Protection/Support Organisations

Childline: 0800 1111 (freephone)

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Vulnerable Adults

Adult Protection Coordinator: 01443 425425

Emergency Duty Team 01443 849944
(5.00pm - 8.30am Mon to Thu, 4.30pm - 8.30am Fri to Mon)

Occupational Health & Wellbeing Unit: 01443 494024

A free service to all Rhondda Cynon Taf employees it provides strictly confidential and specialist advice and services.

Employees can self refer for confidential counselling services.

All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline (Free 24 hour helpline for professionals and those experiencing Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence)

Tel: 0808 80 10 800

E-mail: www.allwaleshelpline.org.uk

Women's Aid in RCT

WA-RCT
Parkview
45 Morgan Street
Pontypridd
CF37 2DS

Mankind Initiative UK National Helpline - 01823 334 244

Provides confidential support and help for men who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The Dyn Project (Support for male victims of Domestic Abuse)
113-116 Bute Street,
Cardiff,
South Glamorgan
CF10 5EQ

Tel: 0808 801 0321
E-mail: support@dynwales.org
www.dynwales.org

Broken Rainbow

National UK helpline- support for LBGT people experiencing domestic violence

Tel: 0300 999 5428
E-mail: help@brokenrainbow.org.uk
www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

BAWSO - 0800 7318 147 (24 hour helpline)

A specialist agency that can provide culturally sensitive and appropriate information and services to support people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds who are affected by domestic abuse.

New Pathways (Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Support Services)

Willow House
11 Church Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 0BS

Tel: (01685) 379310
E-mail: enquiries@newpathways.org.uk
www.newpathways.co.uk

Hafan Cymru

Talbot Road
Pontyclun
Talbot Green
CF72 8AE

Tel: (01443) 237015
E-mail: enquiries@hafancymru.co.uk
www.hafancymru.co.uk

VALREC (Valleys Regional Equality Council)

Help & support for victims of harassment, violence and other hate crimes

Venture House
Navigation Park
Abercynon
CF45 4SN

Tel: (01443) 742704
E-mail: info@valrec.org
www.valrec.org

The Samaritans: 08457 909090

A free, confidential 24 hour service offering emotional support for anyone in a crisis.

Victim Support: 0845 612 1900

An independent charity which helps people cope with the effects of crime. They provided free and confidential support and information.

Refuge: 0808 2000 247

Refuge's network of safe houses provides emergency accommodation for women and children when they are most in need.

Dragonsavers Credit Union Ltd: 01443 777043

Provides free, confidential and sympathetic financial advice and assistance.

Stepchange Debt Charity: 0800 033 4321

A free independent counselling service to help solve debt problems, avoid bankruptcy and learn how to manage money.