



Policy Statement

1. Introduction

This Council believes that, in working towards equal opportunities and social justice, it is important to state that we oppose all forms of violence and abuse. This policy will concentrate on domestic violence which the Council recognises as a serious issue which affects many peoples lives, the vast majority being women and children. The Council will therefore take every possible step to make clear that all forms of violence and abuse against women and children - mental, physical, and/or sexual - are unacceptable.

The policy and guidelines apply to all: Chief Officers, Administrative, Professional, Technical, Clerical, Manual, Craft and Teaching employees.

The Council resolves to take every possible step, using all available resources, to work towards preventing all forms of abuse against women and children, and to ensure that everyone who lives in the council area is free from fear, intimidation, violence, and abuse.

The Council also resolves to take every possible step, using all available resources, to provide whatever support is required by those who have experienced abuse, including children and young people who have experienced the abuse of their mothers. The Council will give priority to the needs expressed by survivors of abuse themselves.

Many of our employees may be experiencing/or have experienced episodes of domestic violence in their personal relationships and we therefore seek to introduce effective, confidential and sympathetic support mechanisms for these employees.

The policy and guidelines apply to all employees who may be experiencing domestic violence. It should be recognised, however, that the majority of those employees affected are likely to be women, this being reflective of nationally recognised statistics.

2. Policy Aims

The aim of the policy and guidelines is to provide support to employees experiencing domestic violence and to give managers advice on how to handle any issues which may arise relating to the employees work.

The policy guidelines also aim to highlight the serious view taken by East Dunbartonshire on domestic violence and the action which could be taken against any employee who is a perpetrator of domestic violence.

3. Action Points

The Council's position on domestic violence will be widely publicised.

Views on the policy have been sought from East Dunbartonshire Women's Issues Forum and the Trade Unions within East Dunbartonshire. Training will be provided

for certain employees on the implementation of the guidelines ie awareness seminars for managers, specific training for eg housing, social work staff.

Monitoring systems will be introduced to collate data of all incidents of domestic violence against employees.

The policy and guidelines will be reviewed in line with any new initiatives or good practice.

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

Guidelines for Employees on Domestic Violence

1. Introduction

It is recognised by East Dunbartonshire Council that domestic violence is a serious issue within our society and affects many peoples lives, the vast majority being women. We will seek through our policy to support our employees who may be experiencing/or have experienced episodes of domestic violence, and through these guidelines to do what we can to help combat domestic violence.

The policy and guidelines apply to all employees who may be experiencing domestic violence but we underline that the vast majority of these who may require them are women, this being reflective of nationally recognised statistics.

2. The Reality of Domestic Violence

Almost one third of women experience domestic violence in their lifetime. In some instances leading to serious injury or death. Wife assault accounts for 25% of all reported crime, some of whom may be your friends and colleagues.

Employees should be aware that domestic violence can influence the health and self confidence of the person who may then be unable to confide in others or seek help. Domestic violence may impact on an individuals work performance and by behaving in a supportive manner to colleagues, you can assist your colleague in gaining confidence to tackle the problems that a survivor of domestic violence meets.

3. What is Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse which may involve the following behaviour in isolation, sequentially or together:

punching, pushing, kicking, choking, rape, indecent assault, verbal insults, constant criticism, degradation, humiliation, withholding money or not giving enough to cover costs of food, heating etc, telling their partner who they may or may not visit or what they may or may not do.

4. Confidentiality

All employees should take care to ensure that the address and telephone numbers of colleagues are not given out. It is often the case if someone has moved section or location that the new workplace is revealed. You are asked that you do not volunteer your colleagues workplace, to do so may put your colleague in serious danger. Many women have been murdered by partners not wishing the women to leave their home.

5. **Support**

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you can either approach your Manager, to gain support or if you cannot approach your manager you can contact a Human Resources Adviser.

Other Sources of Support:

East Dunbartonshire Women's Aid
2nd Floor
4 Freeland Place
Kirkintilloch
G66 1ND
Tel no 0141 776 0864
Open Monday - Friday 9.30 am - 3.30 pm - Refuge, Office, 24 hour phone line

Scottish Women's Aid
12 Torphichen Street
Edinburgh
Tel no 0131 221 0401

Gryfte Women's Aid
(for black women and women from minority ethnic communities)
Tel no 0141 353 0859

Citizens Advice Bureau
5 Dalrymple Court
Townhead
Kirkintilloch
Tel no 0141 775 2424

Domestic Violence Unit
(whose staff consist of a female Police Officer and a Social Worker)
Advice & Response
126 Cowgate
Kirkintilloch
Tel no 0141 775 1311

The Rape Crisis Centre
PO Box 53
Glasgow
Tel no 0141 331 1990

Other Sources of Support: (continued)

Trade Union, Social Fund and Welfare Secretary
(who may help with related problems eg money advice, support) etc
UNISON - June Day
GMB - Pauline Paxton
TGWU - for Financial advice/Lawyer - initially Tel no 0141 332 7321
MSF - Mike Fuller - Tel no 0141 229 6100
EIS - Frank Healy - Tel no 0141 776 8354 - EIS Helpline Tel no 0990 234729
SSTA - David Eaglesham - 0131 556 0605
NASUWT - Carole Fox 0141 229 5790

For people with learning difficulties:

Advice & Response
126 Cowgate
Kirkintilloch
Tel no 0141 775 1311

Cathy Watson
Victim Support
21 Broadcroft
Kirkintilloch
Tel no 0141 776 1090 or Helpline No 0141 942 9900

6. **Employees who are the perpetrators of Domestic Violence**

Employees should be aware that domestic violence is a serious matter which could lead to criminal conviction. If you are convicted of an offence linked to domestic violence, your action will also lead to an internal investigation which may result in serious disciplinary action being taken against you by the Council. In addition, such behaviour, whether you are convicted or not, is against the aims and values of the Council and any employee perpetrating domestic violence is encouraged to seek assistance to end such behaviour.

If the Council discovers, outwith criminal action, that you are a perpetrator of domestic violence you will be offered appropriate counselling. However, you will be subject to a disciplinary investigation which may lead to formal disciplinary action ie written warnings, redeployment or even dismissal. Such action will be in line with the Council's Code of Discipline and Disciplinary Procedures for Chief Officials, APT&C, Manual & Craft Employees and Standard Circular 69 - Disciplinary Procedures for Teachers.

7. **Taking Domestic Violence Seriously**

Jokes or comments that condone violent behaviour towards women/men or domestic violence are insensitive and cannot nor will be tolerated within the workplace as to do so would make light of what can often be a life threatening situation.

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

Managers Guidelines for Assisting Employees Experiencing Domestic Violence

1. **Policy Statement**

This Council believes that, in working towards equal opportunities and social justice, it is important to state that we oppose all forms of violence and abuse. The policy concentrates on domestic violence which the Council recognises as a serious issue which affects many peoples lives, the vast majority being women and children. The Council will therefore take every possible step to make clear that all forms of violence and abuse against women and children - mental, physical, and/or sexual - are unacceptable.

The policy and guidelines apply to all: Chief Officers, Administrative, Professional, Technical, Clerical, Manual and Teaching employees.

The Council resolves to take every possible step, using all available resources, to work towards preventing all forms of abuse against women and children, and to

ensure that everyone who lives in the council area is free from fear, intimidation, violence, and abuse.

The Council also resolves to take every possible step, using all available resources, to provide whatever support is required by those who have experienced abuse, including children and young people who have experienced the abuse of their mothers. The Council will give priority to the needs expressed by survivors of abuse themselves.

Many of our employees may be experiencing/or have experienced episodes of domestic violence in their personal relationships and we therefore seek to introduce effective, confidential and sympathetic support mechanisms for these employees.

The policy and guidelines apply to all employees who may be experiencing domestic violence. It should be recognised, however, that the majority of those employees affected are likely to be women, this being reflective of nationally recognised statistics.

2. **Policy Aims**

The aim of the policy and guidelines is to provide support to employees experiencing domestic violence and to give managers advice on how to handle any issues which may arise relating to the employees work.

The policy guidelines also aim to highlight the serious view taken by East Dunbartonshire Council on domestic violence and the action which could be taken against any employee who is a proven perpetrator of domestic violence.

3. **Managers Responsibilities**

As a manager, you have an overall responsibility for the health and safety of East Dunbartonshire Council's employees at work. Almost one third of all women experience domestic violence in their lifetime. In some instances leading to serious injury or death. Wife assault accounts for 25% of all reported crime against women, some of whom may work for you.

You should be aware that domestic violence can influence an individuals health and self confidence and they may be unable to confide in others or seek help. You should be alerted to the possibility of domestic violence if an employee is depressed, distracted, lacking in self confidence or visibly injured.

You should recognise that domestic violence is an important issue for women. Some of the following factors will also influence how women experience domestic violence and its impact on them: disability, learning difficulties, mental illness, control exerted by carers whether families or institutions, pressure to care for abusive partners or mentally ill adults. For some there is the added anxiety of whether it is safe to complain.

The welfare of the employee should be of paramount importance to managers. Domestic violence could impact on the employees work performance therefore by providing support, you would improve service delivery and reinforce good management/employee relations.

4. **What is Domestic Violence?**

Domestic violence is physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse which may involve the following behaviour in isolation, sequentially or together:

punching, pushing, kicking, choking, rape, indecent assault, verbal insults, constant criticism, degradation, humiliation, withholding money or not giving enough to cover costs of food, heating etc, telling their partner who they may or may not visit or what they may or may not do.

5. **Confidentiality**

You should make our employees aware of the need for confidentiality. This includes:

Ensuring that the address and telephone numbers of individuals are not given out.

All steps are taken to ensure files about employees experiencing domestic violence do not contain information about their addresses (eg Personnel, Housing and Social Work files). These are not legally confidential and can be demanded by the courts and access given to the abuser. Several women have been forced to flee because their abuser traced them using this method.

If an employee experiencing domestic violence has been transferred due to the behaviour of a violent partner you should make appropriate security arrangements for employees working alone. Colleagues must be informed that under no circumstances should the employees workplace be given as to do so may put the employee in serious danger.

Where employees are partners who work in close proximity to one another and allegations of domestic violence arise or are founded upon in law, you should consider the Health and Safety implications of all the employees within the work area. It may be appropriate to discuss options for a safer working environment with the appropriate trade union and Human Resource Services.

6. **Support**

If possible you should take action to ensure that only those employees that "need to know" are informed eg if an employee of the local housing office is experiencing domestic violence and is also a tenant, applications regarding their housing should be referred to another local service office if required.

Employees who are experiencing domestic violence may want to discuss their situation as regards the impact this is having on their work performance and other related problem with someone other than their line manager or even employed within their service. This can be facilitated through a Human Resources Adviser, who will either assist personally or refer the employee to an external counselling service.

Some sources of help are:

East Dunbartonshire Women's Aid
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Kirkintilloch
Tel no 0141 776-1090 or Helpline Tel no 0141 942 9900

7. **Dealing Sensitively and Sympathetically with Performance Related Matters**

When giving work performance assessments or doing sickness monitoring you should take into account how the stress of an employee in a violent relationship

may impinge on their work performance. You should seek to encourage the employee to decide which course of action would best meet their needs.

7. **Dealing Sensitively and Sympathetically with Performance Related Matters (continued)**

You may wish to offer the provision of extended special leave as an option for an employee in a violent situation. Time off work may be needed for the huge upheaval that will take place eg there may be visits to solicitors, courts, banks, schools, Women's Aid, etc. Unless covered by National Conditions of Service or an East Dunbartonshire local agreement paid leave of absence may be considered up to a maximum of 5 days compassionate leave. In exceptional cases an employee may be offered unpaid leave to cover an extended period of absence where the complexity of the situation demands this, allowing the employee a chance to look at options open to them. Human Resource Services can advise managers on what the appropriate leave would be for an employee based on the individual circumstances.

Women can be supported by being given the option of going on assertiveness training courses or women's potential courses which would build her confidence and enable her to build up her morale. Care should be taken to ensure that the provision of a training course is not seen as the only means of helping the victim to cope with Domestic Violence. The only solution is for it to STOP. Training needs can be discussed with the Human Resource Services, Organisational Development Section. A Human Resources Adviser can also give advice to you regarding any financial difficulties the employee may have as a result of them leaving an abuser.

8. **Ensuring Safety**

You should take all reasonable steps to ensure employees who are experiencing domestic violence are able to work in a safe environment where violent partners are unable to contact them.

More domestic murders are committed at the point when an individual decides to leave the home or immediately after. It is important therefore not to underestimate the danger or to assume that fears are exaggerated, the threat is very real. If possible you may be able to offer a transfer to another location, redeployment, work from home, change working hours or some other temporary arrangement which would allow the employee to feel safe from their violent partner.

You should record any incidence of violence against an employee at the workplace. These may be used if the employee wants to press charges or to obtain an injunction.

9. **Employees who are the Perpetrator of Domestic Violence**

Employees should be aware that domestic violence is a serious matter which may lead to criminal conviction and that such criminal behaviour is in breach of the Council's aims and values, and the law. If convicted, an employee may face disciplinary action.

If it is discovered that an employee (even though they may not have been convicted) is perpetrating domestic violence, consideration should be given to referring them to a counselling programme, where available. Sometimes it may be appropriate to take other types of action eg re-deployment, disciplinary action.

9. **Employees who are the Perpetrator of Domestic Violence (continued)**

If it is the case that the perpetrator is in a job which requires them to give advice to or that they are likely to be approached by individuals in the community experiencing domestic violence, you should discuss with the Human Resource Services whether it is appropriate for the individual to continue in the post. Prior to any action being taken the appropriate Trade Union will be consulted. Any disciplinary action will be as per the Code of Discipline/Discipline Procedures for Chief Officials, APT&C and Manual & Craft Operatives and Standard Circular 69 - Disciplinary Procedures for Teachers.

In some cases redeployment, transfer, written warning or termination of employment may be considered. No decision should be taken regarding any of these actions without seeking advice from a Human Resource Adviser.

10. **Taking Domestic Violence Seriously**

As a manager you should ensure employees dealing with domestic violence are trained in the issues and supported.

You should make certain that all employees are aware that domestic violence is a serious matter which may lead to criminal conviction and that such behaviour is against the Council's aims and values and the law.

Jokes and comments that condone violent behaviour towards women/men or domestic violence should not be tolerated within the work place.

The guidelines for employees on the domestic violence policy should be distributed to all employees and also made available in the workplace eg notice boards.