

Domestic Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy For Decision	15th November 2016
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Leadership and Champion
Outcome	Support and educate Employees
Lead Officer	Director of Performance
Cost: (If applicable)	

1.0 Background

Domestic Violence and abuse continues to be an ongoing issue throughout Northern Ireland, with the Domestic and Sexual abuse helpline answering over 28,000 calls last year. This equates to PSNI being called out to an incident of domestic abuse on average every 19 minutes of every day. In the CC&G area last year there were 2,158 incidents of domestic abuse reported to the PSNI, which is only the tip of the iceberg given that this issue is vastly underreported.

Established in 2007, Onus offers a specialist training and consultancy service on domestic violence and abuse. Onus developed the Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence to enable organisations & communities to be recognised for their support to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse. Their range of supported Pathways empower communities to recognise and respond to those affected by domestic or sexual violence or abuse.

In 2015/16, Causeway Coast and Glens PCSP commissioned Onus to provide training and awareness raising across communities within the CC&G Borough. A Safe Community promotes zero tolerance to domestic violence or abuse.

This initiative included provision for Council Employees has enabled Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to achieve the Gold Award by creating a workplace Domestic abuse policy to support and educate employees across the organisation on domestic abuse.

A Domestic abuse policy was produced by PCSP using best practice from other council's and health trusts across Northern Ireland. (**Appendix 1**) In October 2016,

Deputy Mayor, Councillor James McCorkell accepted the ONUS Gold award on behalf of CC&G Borough Council at a ceremony in The Braid Art Centre, Ballymena.

Recommendation

That the Council approves the Domestic Abuse policy which will see the provision of awareness raising and support to staff.

DRAFT

Domestic Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy

Author: Melissa Lemon (PCSP Officer)	HR Advisor: Sandra Kelly
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Approved by:	Approved by Council/committee:
Date:	Date:
Disseminated to employees:	Available on staff Portal:
Date:	Date:

Domestic Violence & Abuse Workplace Policy

The purpose of this policy is to support employees who experience domestic violence and abuse.

Definition – for the purposes of this policy, domestic violence and abuse is defined as any violence/abuse between family members, current or former partners in an intimate relationship, whenever and wherever the violence occurs. It may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse.

- Domestic violence and abuse is a pattern of behaviour that is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another within an intimate or family relationship. It is usually frequent and persistent. While domestic violence and abuse most commonly refers to that perpetrated against a partner, it also includes violence/abuse against ex-partners, and violence/abuse by any other person who has a close or family relationship with the victim.
- Domestic violence and abuse does not just refer to physical violence but also to sexual, emotional and psychological, and financial abuse; it is, in many cases, made up of a combination of different forms of abuse. Domestic violence and abuse affects not only adults but may be inflicted on, or witnessed by children. The potential adverse effects of living with domestic violence & abuse for children include poor educational achievement, social exclusion and juvenile crime, substance misuse, mental health problems and homelessness.
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that violence/abuse against anyone is unacceptable and that such violence/abuse will not be condoned.
- The Council is committed to raising awareness of domestic violence and abuse in the community through the work of the Policing & Community Safety Partnership and with other local organisations in the council area, including PSNI, Women's Aid and Onus, through delivery of their Safe Place initiative.
- This policy demonstrates the Council's commitment to providing guidance for employees and managers to address the occurrence of domestic violence & abuse and its effects on the workplace and, importantly to signpost to help and support as required.

- Domestic violence & abuse has a damaging effect on victims and can have an adverse impact on their employment as a result of hospitalisation because of physical injuries, not being allowed out of the house, frequently taking time off work sick and longer-term mental health problems. However, the cause of these effects is often not talked about because victims are frightened of further attack and/or of perceived repercussions on their ability to carry out their job.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council acknowledges that domestic violence and abuse is a serious problem across Northern Ireland. It has devastating consequences for victims and their families. It occurs regardless of social class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, religion or age. While it is mainly women who experience domestic violence & abuse, this policy applies equally to men who need advice or support. The PSNI state that a women may endure on average 35 incidents of domestic abuse before the abuse is disclosed. (NI Crime Survey 2004).

In support of this, it is council's policy that anyone who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence and/or abuse can raise the issue, in the knowledge that we will treat the matter, sympathetically and as far as possible, confidentially. Please see clause on confidentiality which outlines limitations to confidentiality, in cases where there are safeguarding concerns and/or concerns regarding serious harm to individuals.

The council recognises that domestic abuse is not confined to the home and that it is inevitable it will impact upon the employee in the workplace. The council recognises their duty to keep an employee safe within the workplace and would encourage employees to disclose to a line manager or trusted colleague (please see staff portal for list of trusted colleagues) if they have any concerns about their safety in the workplace or travelling to and from the workplace. The council will take all reasonable steps to address these concerns.

This policy applies to all staff in all departments including temporary, agency, and seasonal staff within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. This policy applies equally to women, men and those in same sex relationships.

Employees who have been subjected to domestic abuse will be treated no less favourably in terms of their existing employment or career development.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the policy is to make the workplace a safe and supportive environment for all employees of the council who experience domestic abuse.

The objectives are:

- To offer support to our employees in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse sympathetically and in confidence
- To maximise the safety of our employees in the workplace
- To signpost to external support agencies who can carry on the support beyond the workplace
- To deal effectively with perpetrators of domestic abuse among our workforce, as appropriate and to challenge behaviours and attitudes through our awareness raising campaigns.

Confidentiality

Domestic abuse is a sensitive issue and those experiencing it are often reluctant to discuss it with managers or colleagues. The council respects an employee's right to keep private the fact that they have experienced domestic abuse within the statutory limitations outlined below and all records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. Absence records will not contain detail relating to domestic abuse.

Whilst employees experiencing domestic abuse normally have the right to complete confidentially, in circumstances of child protection or the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse, the child/adult protection services may need to be involved. In addition, where there is serious concern regarding potential, serious harm to an individual, or where a crime has been disclosed, there may be a legal requirement to share information with appropriate statutory organisations. The Council wishes to ensure that all actions arising from disclosure of domestic violence or abuse are employee led and will endeavour to support employees but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in cases where a crime or risk of significant harm has been disclosed.

Other Considerations

In addition, the council will consider the following actions where applicable and where the work of the Council and services to citizens will not be compromised by their implementation.

The Council will make every effort to assist an employee experiencing domestic abuse. If an employee needs to take leave from work due to domestic abuse, the

length and type of leave agreed will be determined by the individual's situation through collaboration with the employee, their line manager and HR subject to balance of both service needs and the needs of the individual.

In this context, managers are encouraged to provide a sympathetic response to requests for special leave (unpaid); flexible working and other revised working arrangements as a result of domestic abuse, for example flexibility in working hours or time off when required to enable the employee to seek protection, go to court, look for new housing, enter counselling, arrange childcare etc.

Council will consider the requirement for a change of working arrangements on a short-term or long-term basis, as necessary. (For example, moving the employee away from reception area or from working in a ground floor office which is visible to the street if required; redeployment or relocation, changing shift patterns, changing hours etc.).

Changes to arrangements for the payment of salary, if requested, including salary advance (to be recouped over a 12 month period, therefore not to add any increase pressure to the said employee by financial hardship, for example an employee earning £1,200 per month who takes an advanced salary i.e. 2 x month salary at once, will repay the amount by a reduction in salary over a 12 month period, so said employees salary will reduce to £1,100 per month for 12 months).

Providing support for employees

The Council will make support available to employees involved in domestic abuse through line managers, trusted colleagues, human resources, occupational health and the confidential Carecall counselling service.

Their role is to:

- Be available and approachable to employees experiencing domestic abuse;
- Listen, reassure and support individuals;
- Keep information confidential (subject to the requirements of child and adult protection);
- Respond in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner, though they are not trained counsellors, they are there to support and sign post the employee to relevant agencies that can help them, (full list of services available in appendix 1)
- Discuss the specific steps that can be taken to help the employee stay safe in the workplace;
- Ensure the employee is aware of the options available to them;

- Encourage the employee to seek the advice of other relevant agencies by calling 08088 021414 – the 24 hour Freephone National Domestic Violence helpline.

Performance

The Council is aware that victims of domestic abuse may have performance problems such as absenteeism or lower productivity. When addressing performance and safety issues, the Council will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation and/or safety problems and aim to assist the employee in seeking professional help. The Council will address health and safety concerns in the workplace and will signpost to external agencies to carry on support beyond the remit of the workplace. The Council will commit to collaborative working with external agencies (if desired by the employee) to provide a joined up approach to supporting the employee, both inside and outside of the workplace.

Visible Resources for those affected by domestic abuse

The Council will support the Safe Place initiative which provides contact details for a range of organisations to support employees living with domestic abuse, and will post a list of resources available in high visibility locations. Safe Place cards will be left across council premises, both in visible areas and in discrete locations (for example in toilets) so they can be easily accessed by employees.

Other support arrangements:

Furthermore, the Council will facilitate access to appropriate skilled support and information, including the service from Carecall 0800 389 5362.

Council will continue training of staff to "trusted colleague" level for domestic abuse. These employees will be available as the first point of contact for employees experiencing domestic abuse. They will be trained through the ONUS programme, in responding to disclosures of domestic abuse, information about relevant agencies that offer support, and information on current legislation, reports, publications and events to do with domestic abuse. The trusted colleague for domestic abuse will be drawn from a range of areas within the Council and will include staff from HR, Managers and Union Representatives.

Training manager to identify and respond appropriately

The Council will continue with the ONUS programme of training for line managers and trusted colleagues to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the implementation of this policy and guidance.

Managers will be trained to:

- Identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties (See Appendix 2 for examples of signs an employee may show if experiencing abuse)
- Provide initial support
- Offer referrals
- Discuss ways to help the employee stay safe in the workplace
- Understand that they are not counsellors. Counselling is to be left to trained professionals and no one should attempt to act in place of a domestic abuse expert or counsellor. The best practice for a manager is to refer the employee to the appropriate domestic abuse support services.

Support may include:

- Information on local advice and support agencies and help lines
- Access to appropriate, confidential, independent, professional counselling
- Time off when necessary e.g. to attend support agencies; solicitors; court hearings; for rehousing; or to alter childcare arrangements
- Availability of assertiveness training or confidence building
- Redeployment
- Safety planning for the workplace (including risk assessment)

Perpetrators who are employees:

With regard to perpetrators of domestic abuse, the Council will undertake to do the following:

- Reserve the right to invoke the disciplinary procedure against any employee who perpetrates violence, including domestic violence and abuse.
- Take disciplinary action against any employee who uses the time, property or the resources of the Council to abuse a partner, family member or anyone.
- Require an employee who has a Non-molestation Order or Occupation Order in place against them, to declare this to the council.
- Take action, as appropriate, to minimise the potential for a perpetrator to use their position or resources to find the whereabouts, or other details, of their partner or ex-partner.

If the victim and perpetrator work in the council:

The Council is committed to providing a Safe Place for all employees to work.

Where allegations have been made regarding abusive behaviour between employees in the workplace, regardless of their relationship to each other, reference should be made to the Council Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace Policy.

Risk assessment should be undertaken immediately to ensure that all employees are safe in the workplace.

The Role of managers:

It is unlikely that employees experiencing domestic abuse will tell people at work of their situation or approach their manager with their problems in the first instance.

It is far more likely that a manager will become aware of the situation through their awareness of possible signs of domestic abuse. Details of possible signs are contained in Appendix 2

While this policy applies to all employees of the Council, it is line managers, in consultation with “trusted Colleagues” and when necessary, HR, who will play a key role in implementing it in practice. Managers need to make a managerial commitment, rather than a personal commitment, to assist a member of staff who is experiencing domestic abuse.

The role of the line manager can be summarised as follows:

- Where domestic abuse is suspected or known, managers will contact a trusted colleague for advice before any discussion with the staff member takes place, if it is possible to do so.
- Provide a sensitive, non-judgemental response and reassure the employee that they are not to blame, there is no justification for this treatment of them and that there is help and support available, both through the Council and links with specialist agencies.
- Respect the choices and decisions the employee may make about the situation. Often it is difficult for them to leave due to finances, children and threats of violence. Be aware that a victim may make many attempts before they finally leave their abusive partner.
- Where it is alleged that a member of staff is perpetrating abuse during work time or using work resources, the manager will discuss this as a matter of urgency with HR.
- Managers will review the security of personal information held on members of staff.
- Managers will seek to provide a plan to address security concerns in the workplace including risk assessment for both victim and other employees. They will also keep in contact with the employee during any periods of absence, maintaining confidentiality of their whereabouts at all times.

- Managers will keep confidential records of any discussions and of any action taken. This will be kept with the knowledge and consent of the staff member concerned, who will be able to access it. Copies of all records will be available for the member of staff to submit to relevant authorities as proof of the abuse. (e.g. in court/legal proceeding)
- Use discretion to agree paid time-off for appointments, counselling, re-housing, court attendances etc.
- Ensure rehabilitative return and support under Council's managing absence policy where appropriate
- Consider redeployment, if necessary in regard of location of work
- Consider changes to working hours, shift patterns or flexible working arrangements. Possible workplace adjustments examples are shown in Appendix 3
- Offer support through occupational health or Carecall or assist with referral to specialist agencies for on-going help or support.
- Ensure referral to Occupational Health in accordance with stress, as noted in the managing absence policy.
- Take advice from HR staff in regard to issues of employment.

Evaluation and review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Corporate Services Directorate, initially annually and then at least every two years or as necessary to ensure that it satisfies legal requirements, government policy and our customers' expectations of the service. The policy may also be revised in consultation with the relevant support agencies and Onus in light of changing legislation and current good practice.

Section 75 and Good Relations

Causeway Coast and Glens Council is fully committed to meeting its obligations in relation to Equality and Good Relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. In this regard this policy will be screened using Section 75 guidelines and will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment if found necessary as a result of the screening process.

Contact Details

The Council welcomes comments on this policy and on how we can improve our services. Any issues or queries relating to this policy should be addressed to:

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APPENDIX 1

USEFUL CONTACTS DETAILS:

24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline	0808 802 1414
CareCall	0800 389 5362
Westhealth	0114 250 2000
Causeway Women's Aid	028 7035 6573
Foyle Women's Aid	028 7128 0060
PSNI	101 – ask to speak to Domestic Abuse Officer
Childline	0800 11 11
Victim Support	028 9024 4039
Onus	028 2568 9450
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Helplines:	
Gay Helpline	028 9032 2023
Lesbian Helpline	028 9023 8668 (Thursday evenings only)
Rainbow Project	028 9031 9030
Men's Advisory Project (MAP)	028 9024 1929
Men to Men	028 9023 7779

APPENDIX 2

Identifying Domestic Abuse

Some signs that an individual may be experiencing Domestic Abuse can include:

- Poor timekeeping without explanation or poor explanation
- High absenteeism rate without explanation or poor explanation
- Uncharacteristic anxiety, depression or problems with concentration
- Uncharacteristic deterioration in the quality of work performance
- The receipt of repeated upsetting calls/faxes/e-mails/text messages etc.
- Individual being a victim of vandalism or threats
- Obsession with time
- Needing regular time off for appointments
- Inappropriate or excessive clothing
- Repeated injuries, or unexplained bruising or explanations that do not match the injuries displayed.
- Increased hours being worked for no apparent reason
- Prevented from seeing children or fear of not seeing children
- Limited money/access to money
- Restricted work/social life

Please note that this is not a checklist, some victims may display no signs of violence or abuse. It is also essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances, of which domestic abuse may or may not be one.

APPENDIX 3 – Possible workplace adjustments

People experiencing domestic abuse are especially vulnerable when they attempt to leave abusive partners and may become vulnerable going to or coming from work or while they are at work as the perpetrator knows where they can be located. This can give rise to health and safety issues and an increased risk of workplace abuse.

The following are examples of adjustments that could be considered to help individuals experiencing domestic abuse:

- If the employee's duties require time spent outside their place of work, consider how the risks can be minimised.
- Checking that the employee has arrangements for safely getting to and from home.
- Consider accommodating requests, if possible, to allow the individual to change work pattern, work location or workload. Consider allowing flexible or more flexible working or special leave to facilitate any practical arrangements that are required, e.g. legal advice, court hearings, counselling, re-housing etc.
- Diverting or screening calls for the employee or obtaining a new number.
- Providing an alternative email addresses.
- If consent given, alerting reception staff if the perpetrator is known to come to the workplace or in case they might.
- If consent given, advising colleagues of the situation on a need to know basis and agreeing what response should be given if the perpetrator contacts the office.
- Consider financial assistance by way of a directly paid salary advance. Advance payment would be agreed by Manager and HR, and the employee would agree how and when any such payment would be paid back to council. (It is anticipated that this would be evenly over a 12 month period)

Further advice will be available from HR and the trusted colleague's team.