

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 This policy is designed to help those who are experiencing domestic violence and economic abuse, referred to as victims of abuse and/or survivors of abuse in this policy.
- 1.2 This policy applies to, employees, volunteers, workers, agency staff, or anyone working on behalf of Community Action Isle of Wight (known collectively in this policy as 'Staff').
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.
- 1.4 This policy will be reviewed and amended on a regular basis in line with company procedures. Any changes will also be made in accordance with any changes in the law and best practice in this regard.
- 1.5 The responsibility for implementing this policy lies with all Staff. Collectively we are all responsible for ensuring that domestic violence and abuse is not tolerated, and that support is made available when needed.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Community Action Isle of Wight ('We') are committed to a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator.
- 2.2 The statistics indicate that domestic abuse is a common occurrence, but often not spoken about or stigmatised. We recognise that as employers we have a unique opportunity to provide advice support and assistance in breaking down barriers in this regard. We also recognise that domestic violence and economic abuse has an impact on productivity, absenteeism, workplace morale and motivation.
- 2.3 We recognise that this is an emotionally charged and complex issue for domestic abuse survivors. We do not expect all Staff to fully understand the experience of domestic abuse survivors as this is their unique experience and personal to them and their situation. However, it is hoped that all Staff will extend consideration and assistance and can be considered as allies to those who need help.

- 2.4 We understand that as an employer, we are in a unique position to support change. We are able to provide an opportunity to ensure that there is an open culture at work. A work environment which destigmatises the issue.
- 2.5 We expect that the work environment in accordance with this policy supports survivors in seeking help if they wish to do so. Furthermore, that this policy enables those experiencing domestic abuse to be treated with confidentiality, respect, and dignity during the process of seeking help.
- 2.6 We have a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to domestic abuse. We are committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support and assistance.
- 2.7 This policy also covers the approach we will take in the following circumstances:
- i) Where there are concerns an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse, we will provide support, advice, and assistance.
 - ii) Where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.
 - iii) Educating employees and training managers and HR to ensure they can deal with such issues in supportive, sympathetic, and informed manner yet with a non-judgmental approach.

3. WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- 3.1 There is currently no legal definition of domestic abuse, however this is under review and may be set out in law in the near future.
- 3.2 Currently there is a non-statutory definition which is used by the UK Government:
- ‘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. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional’.*
- 3.3 The key points to take from this non-legal definition are that domestic abuse is not limited to violence but can also include:
- (a) Control.
 - (a) Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation, and control with the use of threat or physical or sexual violence).

- (b) Psychological or emotional abuse.
- (c) Physical or sexual abuse.
- (d) Financial or Economic abuse and control
- (e) Harassment and stalking.
- (b) Online or digital abuse.

3.4 Domestic abuse does not just cover the behaviours between partners, but family members as well. Domestic abuse can take place for example between parent and grown-up child.

3.5 **Controlling Behaviour**

- 3.5.1 Controlling behaviour is a range of actions which make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain.
- 3.5.2 Controlling behaviour deprives the person of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

3.6 **Financial Abuse**

- 3.6.1 Financial abuse is a form of coercive control, this is where a perpetrator uses and or misuses money.
- 3.6.2 They negatively affect or control the other person's freedom of choice as well as their current and future actions, examples include the following:
 - a) Using a credit cards without permission;
 - b) Signing up for credit in the other person's name;
 - c) Signing contracts or commitments for the other person; and
 - d) Gambling with family assets.

3.7 **Economic Abuse**

- 3.7.1 Economic abuse includes more than just "financial abuse" it may include preventing access to essentials that are required to live, including essential resources, such as food, clothing, or transport.
- 3.7.2 It may also include stopping a person from improving their economic status e.g., through training, education, or employment.
- 3.7.3 The Charity Surviving Economic Abuse's definition is as follows:

'Economic abuse is designed to reinforce or create economic instability. In this way it limits women's choices and ability to access safety. Lack of access to economic resources can result in women staying with abusive men for longer and experiencing more harm as a result.'

4. EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), we have legal responsibilities in promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of all staff.
- 4.2 Where there has been a disclosure of domestic abuse by any employee, worker, agency worker, consultant, or self-employed contractor a domestic abuse risk assessment will be undertaken either by a Senior Manager or someone in the organisation who has the relevant training. Alternatively, a professional specialist with experience in domestic abuse assessment will undertake the assessment.

5. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ISSUE IN THE ABSENCE OF DISCLOSURE BY THE VICTIM

- 5.1 There are signs which may indicate a colleague is the victim of domestic abuse. These may include:
- (a) Physical signs of abuse.
 - (b) Uncharacteristic reduction in performance at work.
 - (c) Poor attendance at work.
 - (d) Changes in behaviour.
 - (e) Becoming withdrawn and quiet.
 - (f) Wearing different clothing.
 - (g) Changes to make up (more, less or starting to wear when they did not before).
 - (h) Receiving lots of calls from home or from partner.
 - (i) Partner turning up at work or waiting outside for them when they may not have done so before.
 - (j) Changes in their social media activity, profile etc.
 - (k) Partner speaks for them.
 - (l) Change in socialising with colleagues and/or friends.
 - (m) Unkempt appearance.

- 5.2 It is important not to jump to conclusions as this may be an indication of other issues going on in the colleague's personal life, however it is important to be mindful of the potential issues and seek support and guidance if you have concern for a colleague.
- 5.3 Managers are to approach the issue in a supportive, yet non-judgmental and sympathetic way to ensure that the employee is aware that support can be signposted, and assistance provided.
- 5.4 If the member of staff is a home worker or currently working from home, then a home working risk assessment should be undertaken. This can be a good opportunity to visit their home and/or ask further questions about their home life and domestic situation.
- 5.5 When seeking to open a conversation with an employee about potential domestic abuse there are some questions which can be asked to try to open the conversation, including:
- a. How are you doing at the moment? Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
 - b. I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
 - c. Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence/underperformance at work?
 - d. Is everything alright at home?
 - e. What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

This list of questions has been taken from the CIPD Guide: Managing & Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse.

6. DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

- 6.1 If you are the victim of domestic abuse or are unsure if you are the victim of domestic abuse you can seek support from work colleagues, managers, or HR.
- 6.2 If you feel that you could be the victim of domestic abuse but do not want to speak to anyone about it yet, you can find questions to ask yourself and signs to look for here: <https://www.bright-sky.org.uk/spotting-signs-of-domestic-abuse-for-myself/> . There are also a range of resources that you can access directly at the end of this policy.
- 6.3 You may also request support from a union representative, line manager or a workplace colleague.

- 6.4 Line managers and union representatives are unable to provide counselling for you, but can offer workplace support, information and direct you to other organisations who can offer advice and assistance.
- 6.5 If a colleague makes a disclosure to you, you must respond sympathetically, confidently, and sensitively. You should explain to your colleague that you may need to seek help and guidance from HR or a Line Manager, and if your colleague asks you not to discuss further then you should encourage them to seek support directly.

7. KEY POINTS

- 7.1 The key points to note if a colleague discloses domestic abuse to you is:
- (a) Listen without judgement.
 - (b) Do not excuse or blame.
 - (c) Do not tell the employee to leave their partner,
 - (d) Believe them,
 - (e) Validate what they tell you,
 - (f) Ask them what they feel they need.
 - (g) Share information about resources the employee can access them self.
 - (h) Arrange to keep in touch and agree a safe way to maintain contact - consider a safe word.
 - (i) Seek help and support if you are unsure what to do next.

8. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 8.1 We respect your right to privacy. Whilst we strongly encourage victims of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for their own safety, we would not force anyone to share this information if they did not want to.
- 8.2 All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential.
- 8.3 We will maintain privacy and not disclose any details about the victims of domestic abuse. However, privacy cannot be guaranteed if there are concerns about safeguarding issues with regards to children, vulnerable adults or if we have grave concerns for your safety.
- 8.4 Inappropriate or unauthorised disclosure of private and confidential information with regards to domestic abuse will be taken seriously and those who do make disclosures or share information without good cause may be subject to disciplinary action.

9. SUPPORT FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 9.1 There are a range of measures which may be implemented in order to provide support and assistance on an ongoing basis.
- 9.2 The types of additional support or measures that may be implemented or offered to support include (but are not limited to):
- (a) Waiving the normal absence management procedures.
 - (b) Adjusting working hours on a permanent or temporary basis.
 - (c) Allowing flexible working.
 - (d) Providing special paid leave for appointments.
 - (e) Changing duties or responsibilities.
 - (f) Redeployment or relocation.
 - (g) Creating a safety plan in the event that the perpetrator attends at the workplace or uses work telephones and email to harass.
 - (h) Providing access to counselling or occupational health support.
 - (i) Allowing them to work in the office, for example if you have a COVID-19 risk requirement for home working this could be relaxed for the individual.
 - (j) Providing a mentor or work buddy.
 - (k) Signpost to external support organisations.
 - (l) Provide a quiet space and/or time in the workplace for them to make calls or seek support.
 - (m) Regular catch-up meetings, video calls or telephone calls.

10. TRAINING

- 10.1 We will ensure that every employee, worker, agency worker, consultant, or self-employed contractor has access to a copy of this policy and is aware of our procedure in respect of domestic violence and abuse.

11. WHERE A VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR BOTH WORK FOR COMMUNITY ACTION ISLE OF WIGHT

- 11.1 Where a victim and perpetrator both work for Community Action Isle of Wight, the following action will be taken:
- (a) Consideration as to whether suspension or disciplinary action is required against the perpetrator.

- (b) The workplace is to be kept safe and free from the threat of any abuse by ensuring that the perpetrator and the victim are separated whilst in the work environment.
- (c) Access to computer records and files (of personal information) of all staff are to be kept confidential and accessed by those authorised with express permission only.
- (d) A note will be made on personnel records to expressly state that the victim's details must not be disclosed (under any circumstances) without permission.
- (e) If an employee raises concerns regarding another employee, they should be able to speak confidentially to their line manager. The line manager is to notify the employee and direct them to this policy so that they can be familiar with the framework of support that may be provided to any survivor of abuse.

12. PERPETRATORS

- 12.1 We will not tolerate any threats of intended or actual domestic abuse by any person whether at work, during work time or during personal time away from work.
- 12.2 Such actions impact on all staff and may damage the reputation of the business, even if they take place away from the workplace and during personal time.
- 12.3 We will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis. Ultimately the aim of any action taken is to reduce the risk of abuse and create positive change where possible.
- 12.4 If perpetrators of domestic abuse want to seek help, they will be signposted in a non-judgmental manner to local organisations to seek help.

13. INFORMATION CIRCULATION

- 13.1 Regular knowledge awareness sessions to be held, in order to reduce the stigma and normalise as far as possible that domestic abuse is unacceptable and to create an environment where those experiencing domestic abuse can seek advice and support.

14. TRAINING & EMPLOYER SUPPORT

- **Edward Grey – Blue Touch Paper Consulting**

edward@bluetouchpaperconsulting.co.uk

01983 840 830 / 079600 12475

www.bluetouchpaperconsulting.co.uk

- **Employers Initiative on Domestic Violence**

<https://www.eida.org.uk/>

15. RESOURCES & WHERE TO OBTAIN HELP

<https://www.bright-sky.org.uk/>

24h National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

England & National

<https://www.heartfultherapy.co.uk/therapy/>

<https://safelives.org.uk>

<https://www.respect.uk.net>

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk>

Rape Crisis National Helpline – Sexual Violence 08088 029 999

Karma Nirvana - Helpline for 'Honour'-based abuse and Forced Marriage 0800 5999 247

<https://karmanirvana.org.uk>

The National Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender + Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 999 5428 help@galop.org.uk

Male Survivors Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327 info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Hampshire & IOW

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/en/socialcareandhealth/domesticabuse>

<https://www.iow.gov.uk/council/OtherServices/Domestic-Abuse/Domestic-Abuse-Awareness>

Scotland

<https://abusedmeninscotland.org>

24h Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline 0800 027 1234

You can call the Helpline using a text relay service helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 08088 01 03 02

Text: 077537 410 027 support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Wales

24h Live Fear Free Helpline for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse, & Sexual Violence: 0808 80 10 800 Text: 07800 77333 info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

Northern Ireland

24h Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline: 0808 802 1414

help@dsahelpline.org