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| Agenda Item No: | 7 |  |
| Committee: | Employment Committee | |
| Date: | 18 July 2025 | |
| Report Title: | Domestic Abuse Support (employee) policy and procedure | |

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 The Housing Options Team is working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the council. The process entails evidencing our approach to domestic abuse survivors including producing relevant policy
- 1.2 There is a requirement under DAHA accreditation that we will produce a policy and procedures outlining how we will support staff who are survivors of domestic abuse. The current procedures have been developed into a policy to meet the requirements and has been approved by Management Trade Union & Staff Partnership (MTSP).

1.3

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 As part of the development of the policy, we carried out consultation with the Domestic Abuse Champions staff group, along with domestic abuse survivors with lived experience. All agreed with the content of the document and were happy for it to be published on our intranet once approved.
- 2.2 There are no financial resource implications in relation to implementing this policy. The service has been working to the policy as a procedure for some time.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Agreement is sought from Employment Committee to agree the policy

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Wards Affected | <i>All</i> |
| Forward Plan Reference | N/A |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | Councillor Samantha Hoy |
| Report Originator(s) | <i>Sarah Gove Housing & Communities Manager</i> |
| Contact Officer(s) | <i>Sarah Gove</i> Sgove@fenland.gov.uk 01354 622372 |
| Background Papers | N/A |

4 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 4.1 The Housing Options Team is working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the council. The process entails evidencing our approach to domestic abuse survivors including producing relevant policy
- 4.2 The accreditation will demonstrate how the council reaches and practices a range of standards when supporting and advising clients experiencing domestic abuse
- 4.3 The intended outcome is to publish the document on the council's intranet and to be available to all staff and managers for both awareness raising and support to teams.
- 4.4 Training is being undertaken by all staff as part of our corporate training schedule.

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The policy concerned is the Domestic Abuse Support (employee) policy and procedure.
- 5.2 The policy and procedure is a guide for staff and managers to support colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.3 The document is based on good practice and meets the criteria set out by DAHA. The accreditation process requires the document to be policy and procedures as opposed to procedures. The current version was approved by MTSP on 29 July 2024 with the content unchanged.
- 5.4 Training has been launched as part of a suite of mandatory training to be undertaken by all staff. Two other levels of training have been undertaken by the council Domestic Abuse Champions (level 2 – intermediate) - and level 3 (advanced) by the council's Housing Options Team.
- 5.5 The policy and procedures will be reviewed in 3 years or before in response to legislative changes or good practice. As part of the review the Council will understand any learning from when the Policy has been utilised.

CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As part of the development of the document, we carried out consultation with the Domestic Abuse Champions staff group, along with domestic abuse survivors with lived experience. All agreed with the content of the document and were happy for it to be published on our Intranet once approved.
- 4.2 A separate document aimed at residents has been produced and has been considered by the groups above. The Residents policy will be considered for approval by Cabinet on 21 July 2025.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.6 No alternative options were considered

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications for this policy, although our accreditation reflects best practice when a survivor of Domestic Abuse contacts our Housing Options service for help. This therefore reduces the likelihood of legal challenge with homelessness legislation linked to Domestic Abuse cases.

6.2 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for this policy. There are no financial resource implications in relation to implementing this policy. The service has been working to the policy as a procedure for some time.

6.3 Equality Implications

Schedule A is the Equality Impact Assessment

7 SCHEDULES

- **Schedule A – Equality Impact Assessment**
- **Schedule B –Domestic Abuse Support (employee) policy and procedure**

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 reminded all public authorities of their duty to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The protected groups (previously known as equality strands) are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnerships (eliminate unlawful discrimination only)

Other legislation and practice has determined that we extend this to cover:

- Human Rights
- Socio Economic factors

The duty reminds us of the need to analyse the effect of existing and new policies and practices on equality.

The equality analysis should be proportionate and relevant – not just a tick box exercise. In some cases the written record will be a quick set of bullet points or notes under each heading. Others will need a more detailed explanation.

However, legal case law makes it clear that we must carry out the analysis **before making the relevant policy decision**.

A meaningful equality analysis will help the Council make the best decisions or formulate a policy which best meets our customers needs.

Once a Customer Impact Assessment (replacing our existing Equality Impact Assessment) has been completed there is no need to automatically carry out a new assessment each year. A review assessment has been put in place, and can be completed if there has been no change to the original policy, the way it's implemented and its customer impact.

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO ASSESSING EQUALITY

What is Customer Impact Assessment (CIA)?

- CIA is the act of systematically assessing the likely (or actual) effects of policies or services on people based on the following:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage and civil partnerships
 - Human Rights
 - Socio Economic factors

This means considering the above, as set out in the table below, in relation to a policy, practice or service, before a decision is made.

PLEASE SEE EXPLANATIONS BELOW

| | Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation | Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups | Fostering good relations between different groups |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Disability | | | |
| Age | | | |
| Pregnancy/ maternity/ paternity | | | |
| Race | | | |
| Religion or belief | | | |
| Sex/ Gender | | | |
| Gender reassignment/ Transgender | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | |
| Human Rights | | | |
| Socio Economic Factors | | | |
| Marriage and civil partnerships | | | |

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

- You are looking for opportunities to promote equality, and good relations between all groups as well as removing or mitigating negative or adverse impacts.
- Remember it might not be possible to remove all barriers to service, or your policy or practice may have a negative impact on certain groups ... please note anything of this nature

Why is it important?

- Assessing equality issues helps us understand the needs of our customers, ensures our decisions meet those needs, and are also cost effective, and demonstratable.
- As a public authority we also have a **legal** duty to show “*due regard*” for equality in decision making and the way services are provided
- To be able us to show “*due regard*”, we need to show that consideration of [possible impact to the groups mentioned have taken place **prior** to a decision being made; that equality issues were considered, and that this consideration was rigorous, open minded, and involved thinking about the three arms of the Equality Act as part of this process, and that potential adverse impacts were either removed or reduced, and that all our decisions can be defended if challenged.
- Documenting our equality analysis enables the Council to show it has had “*due regard*” for equality if decisions are challenged. If “*due regard*” for equality can not be shown, decisions may be overturned at judicial review. This could result in lost time, money and negative publicity.
- The sooner equality is considered in a process; the more efficiently that process can be carried out.

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

How can equality be assessed?

1. Gather information This can be consulting with relevant groups, using a previous EqlA as a starting point, consultations carried out by other services, details of the service 'hard to reach groups', customer satisfaction surveys, MOASIC data, consider relevance to equality



2. Assess impact Could different groups be affected differently? Is this difference positive or negative? Consider the three arms of the Equality Act in relation to all the protected groups as per the table. NOTE: The quality of the assessment will depend on the quality of the information gathered



3. Take action This could be to reduce negative or increase positive impact. Produce an action plan where appropriate; make actions SMART. Unlawful discrimination MUST be actioned immediately



4. Summarise your findings on the EqlA form. Where it is clear from initial information gathering that a policy will not have any effect on equality, this may simply be a sentence recording this; the greater the relevance to equality, the greater the level of detail required. Publish your findings



5. Monitor the on-going effects of the policy on equality. This is usually in the form of the annual review carried out in October of each year, to fit in with the service planning cycle. The Equality Act is a **continuing** duty!

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

Customer Impact Assessment

Name and brief description of policy being analysed

Briefly summarise the policy including any key information such as aims, context etc; note timescales and milestones for new policies; use plain language – NO JARGON; refer to other documents if required

The council is undertaking a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. This is a national accreditation and is being lead by the council's Housing Options team. Part of the requirement to achieve the accreditation is to produce two policies and procedures to inform both external customers on our website and internal staff colleagues via the council's intranet of types of abuse and the support available.

Information used for customer analysis

Note relevant consultation; who took part and key findings; refer to, or attach other documents if needed; include dates where possible

The strategy and action plan have consulted on for the statutory 10 weeks consultation process – the responses have been captured in a table and relevant feedback has been captured and incorporated within the strategy and action plan.

Potential cultural barriers have been addressed e.g. Modern slavery under the Cambridgeshire County Council's statutory duty

| | Could particularly benefit | Neutral | May adversely impact | Explanations | Is action possible or required? | Details of actions or explanations if actions are not possible Please note details of any actions to be placed in your Service Plan |
|------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Race | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | Women are more likely to suffer domestic abuse than men, however the policies cover both men and women and same sex relationships. The policies link | N | |
| Sex | | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| | | | | to the council's Safeguarding vulnerable adults policy also. | | |
| Gender reassignment/ Transgender | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Disability- physical | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Age 60+ | | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16) | | X | | | N | |
| Sexual orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Religion or belief | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Pregnancy, maternity and paternity | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |

Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| Marriage & civil partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Human Rights | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Socio Economic | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |
| Multiple/ Cross Cutting | <input type="checkbox"/> | X | <input type="checkbox"/> | | N | |

Outcome(s) of customer analysis

a) Will the policy/ procedure impact on the whole population of Fenland and/ or identified groups within the population; negative ☐ neutral ☐ positive **x**

No major change needed **x** Adjust the policy ☐ Adverse impact but continue ☐ Stop and remove / reconsider policy ☐

Arrangements for future monitoring:

Note when analysis will be reviewed; include any equality indicators and performance against those indicators 2029

Details of any data/ Research used (both FDC & Partners):

The policies have both been consulted on with survivors with lived experience and the council's Domestic Abuse champions staff group

Completed by:

Name: Sarah Gove

Position: Housing & Communities Manager

Approved by (manager signature):

Date published: This should be the date the analysis was published on the intranet

Details of any Committee approved by (if applicable):

Date endorsed by Members if applicable:

Domestic Abuse Support (Employee) Policy & Procedure

1.0 Code of Practice Statement and Overview

Fenland District Council commits to ensuring it deals with all staff affected by domestic abuse in a sensitive manner and a non-judgemental way.

This applies to everyone who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse. Employees have the right to raise the issue with the council and for their concerns to be met effectively, sympathetically and in confidence. However, there are some limited circumstances where confidentiality cannot be assured, as outlined in this policy and procedure.

This document sets out ways the council will support people affected by abuse and to hold the person causing harm to account. The council has a corporate Safeguarding Policy which provides an overarching framework for all safeguarding matters. This Policy should be read in conjunction with that Safeguarding Policy. <https://intranet.fenland.gov.uk/article/16842/Safeguarding-Policy>

The council has also agreed to work with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership board, to work within its safeguarding policy guidelines and procedures. The council also has a specific policy for supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse.

This document links to other staff policies/procedures (e.g., compassionate leave, sickness, maternity, women's health, staff misconduct, anti-bullying, whistleblowing, Data Protection and the council's wellbeing service). <https://intranet.fenland.gov.uk/article/16807/People-Policies>

2.0 Introduction

Domestic abuse refers to abusive behaviours which take place between two people aged over 16 who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships, or have a child together, or are relatives.

The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act states that abuse can be a single incident, but is often a pattern of behaviours, and it takes many forms:

- Online
- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Economic

- Coercive and controlling behaviour

Anyone can experience domestic abuse, and those causing harm can be any gender. Statistics show that women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse as the majority of people causing harm are men. This could also be down to men not reporting domestic abuse. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of class, race, religion, gender identity, sexuality or disability. The individuals who experience abuse are often affected by it long after they have left the situation.

Domestic abuse is a hugely destructive problem. We have a collective responsibility to tackle it. Employers have an important role to play in society's response. Some staff may who are experiencing domestic abuse are also targeted at work. For others, the workplace can be a safe haven and provide a route away from harm. A job can provide economic independence that helps people plan a route out to rebuild their lives. Colleagues and managers can often be the only other people outside the home that survivors talk to each day, therefore, they are uniquely placed to help spot signs of abuse.

It should be noted people causing harm could use workplace resources to threaten, harass or abuse current or former partners. Work colleagues may also be affected and face direct threats or intimidation from people causing harm or have to cover for workers who are experiencing domestic abuse and may be aware that abuse is taking place but not know how to help. The connection between the workplace and domestic abuse is therefore often complex.

3.0 Code of Practice Aims

The code of practice aims to:

- help support our employees and contribute to tackling domestic abuse.
- offer guidance on steps to take, measures to put in place and how to respond when an employee discloses abuse.
- set out steps to follow and help you choose the best free resources for you and your team.
- signpost to external organisations for advice and support to employers and employees.
- focus on abuse from intimate partners, adult children and abusive carers. Other forms of domestic abuse and violence are outside of its scope. This includes crimes in the name of 'honour,' human trafficking, and sexual exploitation, and female genital mutilation. There are links to organisations that specialise in these forms of abuse in the appendix.

The Council will deal constructively, compassionately and sympathetically with cases of domestic abuse. We want to create a safe space for all employees to feel confident in disclosing abuse. We want managers to be alert to the signs of abuse and be confident in how to respond to that situation.

Advice can be sought from your line manager, a member of the HR team, Mental Health First Aiders, First Aiders, Domestic Abuse Champions, or the Housing Options team. They can provide initial support and signpost you to resources. They can help you with any disclosure conversations you would like to have with your colleagues. <https://intranet.fenland.gov.uk/firstaid>

It is your choice who you speak to, the most important thing is that you reach out to someone for support.

Whomever you do speak to will link in with your line manager or HR to work with you to plan a response including discussing and agreeing ways to help you stay safe at work, directing you to the appropriate domestic abuse resources and facilitating referrals.

3.1 Confidentiality and Security

The council recognises that employees experiencing domestic abuse normally have the right to complete confidentiality. Where an employee discusses with their line manager, alternative line manager, Mental Health First Aider, First Aider, HR contact or Domestic Abuse champion or Housing Options Team that they are experiencing domestic abuse, confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, in some extreme circumstances this confidence may need to be broken for example to protect children or vulnerable adults where high risk to safety has been identified, or where we need to act to protect the safety of members of the public, including other colleagues.

The manager needs to be satisfied that appropriate steps are being taken to protect any dependent children or vulnerable adults. If they are not satisfied, they should make a referral to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership board and the employee should be made aware of this fact.

Find Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership board at: [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership web page](https://safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/concerned/professionals-reporting-a-concern/) (<https://safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/concerned/professionals-reporting-a-concern/>)

If a person causing harm is placing their partner or family member(s) in danger, then this may be reported to the police. This will be subject to prior discussion with the employee, wherever it is reasonably practical to do so.

Managers have a duty to maintain a safe environment for all staff and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks. However, it is essential that you agree with the individual concerned what information to tell colleagues. Managers should remind staff that this information is confidential.

The consequences of breaching confidentiality could have serious effects for the person experiencing domestic abuse. Any unauthorised breaches of this could be subject to disciplinary action being taken.

In agreement with the employee, a confidential written summary of discussions and agreed outcomes will be kept in a secure location. These records will only be retained for as long as is necessary to resolve the incident and/or support the employee with the issues they are experiencing. The record will not form part of routine management/personnel records.

Appendix 1

1.0 Guidance

a) Understanding the issue – spotting the signs

Abuse is often associated with physical violence, but it takes many forms. It is important to raise awareness to enable colleagues to spot it. There is an increasing public awareness of psychological, emotional, financial and other coercive forms of domestic abuse. Employers can play a role in educating their workforce about domestic abuse.

If most work meetings happen virtually, physical symptoms of abuse may be masked. It may also reduce the potential for employers and work colleagues to notice changes in behaviour. This may include nervousness or a new reticence to engage in conversation.

By identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage, this will lead to appropriate help being offered. This, in turn, could mean that the member of staff is able to deal with their situation far more effectively. Managers should have a sensitive and non-judgemental approach when dealing with employees who have experienced domestic violence. Further support can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

Indications that something might be wrong can be symptomatic of other issues such as ill-health. Managers within the council should be looking out for these signs more generally. It shouldn't be assumed that these signs relate to domestic abuse. If there is a supportive atmosphere in the workplace, whether in the office, or through team activity then it is more likely employees are going to feel comfortable disclosing abuse.

Employers should also be aware that people can be subject to domestic abuse whilst at work. Considering this possibility is an important part of a thorough employer's response.

b) Changes to look out for

Work Productivity

- Changes in the person's working patterns, such as, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work or meetings early.
- Reduced quality and quantity of work, missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards.
- Change in the use of the phones or email, for example, a large number of personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls, texts, emails. During working from home this could present as being difficult to get hold of or regularly having a partner in the room during meetings

- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may indicate coercive behaviour.

Changes In Behaviour or Demeanour

- Conduct out of character with previous behaviour.
- Changes in behaviour, for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted or depressed.
- Being isolated from colleagues.
- Secretive about their home life or give reasons not to turn the camera on when meeting online.
- Worried about leaving children at home.

Physical Indicators

- Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations.
- Change in the pattern or amount of make-up worn.
- Change in the manner of dress, for example, clothes that do not suit the climate, which may be used to hide injuries.
- Substance use/misuse.
- Fatigue/sleep disorders.

Other Indicators

- Partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace or on social media.
- Isolation from family, friends, colleagues.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

c) Domestic Abuse and the Law

As an employer there are two strands for consideration. First, the legal obligations to staff. Second, support the employee may need should their case become subject to a criminal investigation.

Health and Safety Legislation

Health and Safety laws are designed to ensure that workers have the right to work in a safe environment. The employer considers risks to health and wellbeing and deals with them effectively. There are four main areas of health and safety legislation in the workplace relevant to domestic abuse:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1992

- Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous occurrences Regulations 1995
- Health and Safety (consultation with employees) Regulations 1996. An effective workplace policy and associated guidance on domestic abuse helps to ensure that employers are complying with these laws. This extends to people working from home.

Employment Law

Employers have legal responsibility to provide a safe work environment and have a duty of care to employees. They have a responsibility to help support and protect employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. Employees can request Compassionate leave (see policy above for up to 3 days' paid leave).

<https://intranet.fenland.gov.uk/article/16807/People-Policies>

Managers should consider requests for reasonable time off with pay for employees who have disclosed they are experiencing domestic violence. This may be for them to arrange appointments during the normal working day. These requests should be treated sympathetically. These appointments could include, but are not limited to:

- Appointments with support agencies
- Arranging rehousing
- Meetings with criminal justice agencies e.g. the Police, solicitors,. meetings can be held in Fenland District Council's offices where necessary
- Making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools.

Managers should also explore other measures, such as temporary negotiated hours, means that by arrangement between the manager and employee, the employee's working hours can be temporarily varied for a specifically agreed period to allow them some flexibility while they are dealing with a short-term crisis.

This would generally apply to staff working outside of the flexi system and does not extend to allowing an employee to work shorter hours for full time pay, other than as allowed for under the emergency leave provisions.

An employee summoned as a witness in a criminal court case will be granted special leave.

Individuals leaving a violent partner may face considerable financial hardship. They may have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. HR advice should be sought about what appropriate measures can be taken to help employees in these circumstances. For example, by referring employees to Citizen's Advice for confidential financial advice, or for financial guidance through the Employee Assistance programme.

If the employee has disclosed that their partner has access to their finances or is exerting economic pressure upon them, contact the HR team. They can contact Payroll to change the method of salary payment. If appropriate and with the

employee's consent, referring the employee to occupational health may also be helpful.

d) Domestic Abuse and working from home

Home is not a safe place for everyone. For those experiencing domestic abuse, working from home is more than a shift to video calls. It can mean the removal of work as a safe space and escape from their abuser.

The increase in hybrid working means the role of the employer in general, and the manager in particular, in tackling abuse has never been so crucial. Employers and managers need to respond by considering how they keep in touch with their staff and meet their duty of care remotely.

Three actions employers can take:

1. Daily contact – ensure that no employee goes a full working day without being part of at least one call with a colleague. If contact is lost, be prepared to visit in person.
2. Signposting – make links to support services available on the Intranet (need to check content) and alert the whole workforce to them. Encourage staff to download the 'Bright Sky' App on their work mobiles. Ask staff to take ten minutes to read about how to respond to a disclosure.
3. Empower Line Managers – issue written or verbal guidance to line managers to alter them to the specific challenges of working from home for those experiencing abuse. Task them with demonstrating what steps they are taking to look after their teams.

e) Raising Awareness

The Council is committed to not tolerating abuse against anyone. It is essential that the working environment promotes the view that such abuse is unacceptable

It will not be condoned; nor should it be made the subject of jokes or graphics. The council will aim to raise awareness through the following measures:

- Preparation and distribution of information publicising the issues and the Council's policy
- Training for all employees through the Council's e-learning platform
- Briefings for other appropriate staff, in particular front line staff and customer contact centre staff
- Inclusion of issues relating to domestic abuse in relevant in-house training sessions and as part of the induction.

f) Duties-Responsibilities Line Managers

It is possible that a manager may become aware that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse through associated issues such as attendance management or poor

performance. Therefore, they have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help.

The role of the line manager includes the following points. Appendix 2 outlines this in more detail.

- Identify employees experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse. For example, using regular one-to-one meetings, or by fostering an open management culture that enables team members to disclose sensitive issues.
- Provide support in the first instance. This includes giving specific advice on the options available but also recognising the limitations of their role (managers are not professional counsellors or experts).
- Protect confidentiality so far as is legally appropriate (refer to **Confidentiality and Security**).
- Refer the individual to the appropriate internal or external sources of help and support.
- Be aware of what support is available and explore these options with the employee (a list of support agencies for women and men are attached under **Appendix 1 – Support agencies**). However, if the employee does not want you to contact other agencies, you must follow their wishes, unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- Ensure that the safety of all employees in the team is protected.
- Enable the affected employee to remain productive and at work during a difficult period in their domestic life. This may include using the organisation's special leave policies and procedures.
- It is important that managers provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential. It is also important to work based on believing the employee so that they feel supported.
- The role of manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear (through a workplace policy and its associated guidance) that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.
- It may be that a risk assessment needs to be completed/updated for the employee. Support can be given by the Health and Safety advisor and HR.

i) The HR Team

The council is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of staff. HR will ensure that the appropriate advice and support is available to both staff and managers whenever required.

HR will be responsible for the provision of advice and/or support and will assist in the signposting and referrals to relevant safeguarding agencies and support mechanisms available. These may include Occupational Health, access to confidential counselling and other wellbeing services.

ii) Employees

All employees of Fenland District Council have a responsibility to support survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Employees are responsible for seeking further advice and guidance where they are unclear about the application of any aspect of this policy or associated guidance. We will respond to everyone's circumstances on a case-by-case basis, and support via a co-ordinated community response as needed.

Domestic abuse champions along with member of Management Trade Union & Staff Partnership and Mental Health First Aiders may also be approached for assistance as well as the Housing Options Team.

g) Training

A corporate Domestic Abuse Training plan is in place including all staff, champions and new starters. E-learning for all staff can be accessed from the People XD “

The purpose of the training plan is to:

- help meet Fenland District Council's commitment to raising awareness of and tackling domestic abuse in any form
- enable all Fenland District Council employees to have the awareness, confidence, and support to enable them to recognise and respond appropriately to incidents of domestic abuse involving customers (and/or colleagues in their personal lives).
- To encourage and promote the development of domestic abuse champions within Fenland District Council who can help raise awareness and act as a reference point for colleagues seeking advice.

The training plan sets out tiered training for different roles within the council, including e-learning, online and face-to-face resources depending on a person's role.

Some training will be provided to focus on other areas, such as financial abuse/coercive control. Training will be reviewed annually and form part of new starters welcome to the council.

h) Equal opportunities

The council is fully committed to taking effective action to eliminate discrimination and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in all that we do as an employer. We believe that people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect.

We are determined to ensure that both our employees and everyone entitled to use our services receive fair and equitable treatment. One way that we can do this is by ensuring that those who do not use English as a first language (including if they are a user of British Sign Language) still have equal access to our services through the provision of interpretation and translating services via Language Line. We are

committed to working with our partners and communities to promote good relations and to combat prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. In addition, in terms of supporting people experiencing domestic abuse, the council recognises that a person's intersectional needs will impact on their experience and the support required. The council promotes a range of resources and information via its webpages which can support staff and champions access specialised advice.

i) Responding to people causing harm

Employers have a duty of care to support employees dealing with domestic abuse. This sometimes involves an employee causing harm. Employers can be aware of it through self-disclosure, sometimes prompted by a violent incident, an allegation, or notice through the police.

Managers should be aware of signs that an employee is using abusive behaviours. This has been made more challenging since moving to working from home and a new hybrid working model becoming the new norm.

However, there remains some signs that employers can look out for:

- Negative comments made by the abuser about a partner
- Expressing anger and blaming their partner for issues
- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner, or if working remotely, referencing their partner's behaviour
- Repeated injuries such as scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles.

There may be any number of reasons for this behaviour. But managers who suspect that domestic abuse may be an issue should have the confidence to discuss this with the employee. When doing so, they should ensure that their own safety is not compromised.

They may take another staff member with them or meet in a public place. If a manager believes there is immediate threat to life, the police should be contacted. Engaging with people causing harm in a constructive way doesn't mean excusing the abuse, but it is necessary to increase safety and even save lives.

As part of this conversation, it should be highlighted that it absolutely won't be tolerated in any form. They may engage anyone affected by the issue, whether as an abuser or being abused, to seek support. Employers should recognise that abusers may need help to change their behaviour and should be prepared to encourage employees to address violent and abusive behaviours of all kinds, including connecting them with relevant front line support services.

The information that managers and Fenland District Council gathers will be the basis for its decision about how best to engage with a person causing harm of domestic abuse. The information will help determine what kind of intervention or specialist help is required, for both the person causing the harm and other employees. Managers should keep a confidential record of a disclosure and any actions or decisions that

they have taken. Good records may subsequently help in any legal proceedings or disciplinary hearing involving the person causing harm.

It is important to remember that it may not be possible to assess whether someone is a person causing harm based solely on their outward behaviour. Most people causing harm to conceal their abuse by behaving pleasantly to most people.

There are three primary considerations to make in the event of a person causing harm disclosing abuse:

1. Reduce the risk for family members - The safety and wellbeing of the person experiencing abuse is an urgent priority. Consider what support can be provided to them in the workplace, or externally. Connect with specialist agencies.
2. Reduce the risk to other employees – Consider what potential impact the person causing harm's behaviour may have on other employees. Assess the risk and take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate the risk. Care must always be taken about the disclosure of information to the person causing harm. For example, information about where they are, how they can be contacted or when they are going home.
3. If the person causing harm is targeting an employee – Steps must be taken to mitigate further risks to the survivor and other employees. These may include reassigning duties and restricting the people causing harm access to information about the person they are targeting. Some actions may require coordination between managers which should be done in consultation with the person being abused.

Sometimes the person experiencing abuse and the person causing harm may choose to seek solutions jointly, their decisions should be respected and supported but managers should not facilitate these discussions.

In discussions about potential support at work, managers should observe the following principles:

- Be clear that abuse is always unacceptable and that it may constitute criminal behaviour. Use the legal definition to provide a clear stance from HR.
- Ensure their own safety is paramount.
- Be clear that abusive behaviour is a choice
- Be respectful
- Be positive. It is possible for people causing harm to change if they recognise that they have a problem and take steps to change their behaviour.
- Be aware that on some level the person causing harm may be unhappy about their behaviour.
- Be aware that domestic abuse is about a range of controlling behaviours not just physical violence.
- Help the person causing harm to be aware of the potential cost of continued abuse. This could include arrest, prison, loss of their relationship, long term physical and emotional danger to their partner and children, loss of contact

being sacked from work, loss of their home, financial losses, damage or loss to relationships with family and friends.

- Don't mandate a person causing harm of abuse to attend a person causing harm programme as part of their disciplinary at work. All programmes require the person causing harm to want to change.
- A manager or HR lead's job is not to act as a specialist, but to work alongside specialist services to help manage the risk for all parties.

In some industries, the behaviour of a person causing harm might need to be reported to a regulator, e.g., special rules apply in financial services and serious violent and sexual offences should be disclosed to the Financial Conduct Authority. If this applies to any employee, then this should be reported.

There might also be a higher obligation to disclose information to the employer or the regulator if the employee is charged or convicted for an offence. Employers also need to be aware of strict data protection requirements when processing sensitive personal data. The legal provisions are complex, and employers can contact the DBS or take specialist advice elsewhere. Any employee using abusive behaviours should be warned they risk disciplinary action if their conduct does not change.

Appendix 2

Support Agencies

If you or someone else is in immediate danger you should call 999.

Here are some key organisations that you might find helpful:

You can contact the National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000247 if you're experiencing domestic abuse. You can talk confidentially to someone about your situation and to find out what your options are.

Everyone experiencing harm through domestic abuse or sexual violence, and people who are causing harm, can contact the Domestic Abuse and sexual Violence website, where you will find many useful organisations, support networks and information. The link to this is [Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership - Home \(cambsdasv.org.uk\)](https://cambsdasv.org.uk)

The website has clear guidance for people of all minority groups, and you may select appropriate language.

If you are a man experiencing domestic abuse you can contact the Men's Advice line on 0808 8010327.

If you are in a same-sex relationship you can call the national LGBT+ domestic Violence helpline 0800 9995428.

In addition, these web pages contain information about local and national support agencies who may be able to offer support to people experiencing or perpetrating abuse.

Respond to Abuse, Hestia's free Employer's advice line and digital tool - call 0203 8793695 (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) or visit [Hestia.org](https://hestia.org)

Trade union Support via MTSP - Management Trade Union & Staff Partnership.

You can also speak to any of the council's designated safeguarding officers: Sarah Gove, Phil Hughes or HR

Appendix 3

Procedures For Managers

Awareness and support in the workplace

1. Introduction

If you suspect that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, you should facilitate a conversation to discuss this and identify information and support.

Avoiding the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and likely increase feelings of anxiety for the employee. Often employees will not feel confident in speaking up, so you make the first move to begin a conversation will be important.

To help you support and advise an employee you must consider the four key stages.

2. Four Key Steps

2.1 Step one – Recognising the problem

Warning signs of domestic abuse are:

Work productivity

- Change in the employee's working patterns for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early.
- Reduced quality of work for example missing deadlines or drop in usual performance standards.
- Change in the use of the phone/email, for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls, texts or emails.
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may be indicative of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Changes in behaviour

- Becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted or depressed.
- Becoming isolated from work colleagues/not socialising outside of work.
- Obsessed about leaving work on time.
- Secretive about home life.
- Worried about leaving children at home.

Physical indicators

- Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanation.
- Change in manner of dress, for example, clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries.

- Change in the pattern or amount of make-up used.

These are just a few characteristics, and it is important to remember that different people will act in different ways. You know your team best and will have a level of awareness to recognise when an employee needs support and help.

2.2 Step 2 - Respond

It is important that you believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse, it is not appropriate to ask for proof. You must take a sensitive and non-judgemental approach when supporting an employee who is a survivor of domestic abuse.

This should include:

- Taking the employee seriously, taking time to listen to them.
- Ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in privacy and that you respect their confidentiality as far as possible (see confidentiality in page 5 of the Domestic Abuse Employment procedure)
- Understand that the employee may not wish to approach you and may prefer to involve a third party such as a Domestic Abuse Partnership practitioner, colleague, HR or Trade Union representative, or seek support outside of the workplace. It may be appropriate to offer the option of speaking to a third party who will be able to advise the employee and/or their line manager on what measures can be taken.

If an employee does not wish to speak to you, this should be respected, however, they should be advised of the difficulties which may arise if you are not aware of the relevant facts and circumstances (for instance if there is a potential Health and Safety issue or if other action is being taken on performance or absence monitoring).

- Being aware that there may be additional issues faced by the employee because of tier age, gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, disability etc.
- Being non-judgemental as the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try various options during the process. Research has shown that it can take a long time to break free from an abusive relationship. It should not be assumed therefore, that because an individual returns or stays in an abusive relationship that the abuse was not severe or did not take place.
- Surveys have shown that on average a survivor will suffer serious assault and abuse around 35 times before it is reported to the police.
- Being aware of what support is available and exploring these options with the employee. However, if the employee does not want to contact other agencies, their wishes must be respected.

There are practical steps you must consider taking when you are aware that an employee is a survivor of domestic abuse. Think about the actions within your control you can take/put in place to support the employee. The action possible will depend on the nature/location of work but could include:

- ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised employees only

- reminding reception staff or switchboard not to divulge information about employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.
- offering temporary or permanent changes in workplace, work times and patterns, or helping to make the employee less at risk at work and on their journey to and from work. This could include changes to office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows.
- offering changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in the reception area, or in exceptional circumstances transfer to another post.
- agreeing what information to disclose to colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Providing colleagues with a photograph of the abuser and other relevant details such as car registration number may help maintain an employee's security in the workplace.
- Making sure that the systems for recording employee whereabouts during the days are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the office, consider how risks can be minimised (for example change duties or allow another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys). It may also be sensible to think about supplying a personal alarm for the survivor.

You will know what is operationally possible within your service/team and it is the Council's expectation that you consider all reasonable options to support an employee and help them at work.

2.3 Step 3 - Refer

As a supportive manager it is important to be aware of the range of specialist agencies available to survivors of domestic abuse both nationally and locally. This knowledge will be critical in supporting an employee to see the help available.

Ensure all managers know about:

Respond to Abuse, Hestia's free Employer's advice line and digital tool - call 0203 8793695 (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) or visit [Hestia.org](https://www.hestia.org).

Who is the advice line for?

The Respond to Abuse advice line is available to any business or organisation in the UK who would like free support, guidance or information regarding domestic abuse and how to support employees and colleagues enduring domestic abuse in the workplace.

2.4 Step 4 – Record

If an employee discloses abuse, it is important to record the details of what is said as accurately as possible. The detail of information recorded may be limited.

Should the abuse be subject to criminal proceedings, this is an exhibit and should be given to the police.

This can be recorded as a file note and saved on the manager's file. This is not automatically shared with HR, only if the employee wants to.

3. Disclosure

In this context, there is further guidance around how managers or employees may respond to disclosure from another employee.

If an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it can be challenging for the manager, HR and colleagues.

In the new era of hybrid working, having such a conversation remotely can add to the challenge.

The following suggestions may help.

Note, this is not an exhaustive list, but is designed as prompts to help facilitate open conversations:

- Suggest that you go somewhere quiet and comfortable to speak in private. If the employee works from home, suggest meeting for a walk or at a safe space.
- Acknowledge the courage of the employee and how difficult it must be to talk. Confirm the complete confidentiality of the disclosure. As a guide for managers, any information should only be disclosed to anyone else if it is absolutely necessary in providing help and support and with the prior agreement of the person who has disclosed. Exceptions to that are if the manager believes that there is an imminent threat to life, harm of children or threat against the employer. At that point, an employer should contact the police and follow their advice on next steps.
- If conversing in person, have an open posture. Be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space. If speaking remotely, vocalise that you will be led by them on the pace and extent of the conversation.
- Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful.
- Do not be judgemental. Avoid language that indicates blame or fault such as questions like 'why don't you leave' or 'why haven't you told anyone before'.
- Allow plenty of time and space for them to speak.
- Contact the domestic abuse lead in HR making it known to the individual that you are going to do so, and agreeing what can and cannot be shared, to respect confidentiality.
- Consider what steps might be necessary to ensure they remain safe whether in the workplace or working remotely in case a person causing harm suspects they may have reported the abuse.

1. Support measures

Below is a list of support measures that could be taken depending on the needs of the individual employee. Any measure used should be with the consent of the individual concerned.

- All staff are responsible for ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised staff only.
- Offer temporary changes in the workplace, work times and patterns, helping to make the employee less at risk at work and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows.
- Offer changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in reception area, or, in exceptional circumstances, transfer to another job of the same grade, if available.
- Agree what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser calls at the workplace. Provide colleagues with a photograph of the abuser and other relevant details such as car registration numbers which may help them to maintain security in the workplace.
- Make sure the systems for recording staff whereabouts during the day are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the office, consider how risks can be minimised (e.g. change duties or allow another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys).
- Record any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, emails or visits to an employee by their partner/ex-partner. You should also take down details of any witnesses to these incidents. These records could be used if the employee wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged person causing harm. The employer could also apply for an injunction if the action of an alleged person causing harm impinges on the health and safety of staff.
- It is important to also consider the safety of work colleagues and service users if the alleged person causing harm has access to the survivor at work, whereby work colleagues and/or service users potentially becoming involved as a result of an assault on the survivor.

2. Questions to consider

Questions for the manager to consider in relation to workplace safety and examples of workplace adjustments

Questions for the employee

- Does the alleged abuser know where the employee works?
- Have they ever been followed on their way to/from work?
- Is the employee frightened of anything specific that might take place at work or on the journey to and from work?
- Does the abuser have their work email address and/or work telephone number?
- What information can be shared with the wider team or relevant staff to ensure any changes are implemented and they can deliver an appropriate response?

Contact arrangements

- Retain both a work contact and an emergency contact at home.
- Arrange in advance when and who to contact if an employee doesn't come into work (family member, police, neighbour etc).
- Maintain communication with the individual during any absence, while keeping their whereabouts confidential from the abuser and other agreed people.

Safety to and from work

- Change the route to and from work (e.g. different bus or train time).
- Change the location of where they work or consider a transfer.
- Change the start and finish time of work hours.
- Provide a security escort to and from a car/transport links.

Safety while at work

- Change the locks/codes to enter the workplace.
- Consider a personal or workstation alarm.
- Consider an alternative entrance to, or exit from the workplace, with a chaperone if required.
- Consider screening access to the workplace. If possible and required, enable reception/security to identify the abuser (such as with a photo and their car registration) and advise them on what to do if the abuser arrives at the workplace.

Communication safety

- Review the security of all employee records and personal information.
- Change email addresses/work phone number or divert incoming phone calls and emails.
- Issue instructions to all staff not to reveal employees' personal details or their whereabouts to anyone, including family members.

Managing responsibilities at work

- Consider flexible working or changing work patterns.
- Adjust workload (extend deadlines, reassign responsibilities).
- Consider additional support/supervision/debriefing sessions.
- Provide special leave or time off during the day to attend appointments or court etc.