



FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**(Excluding staff employed by School
Governing Bodies)**

Policy for Managing and Supporting Employees experiencing Domestic Abuse

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Introduction

Flintshire County Council condemns domestic abuse and recognises it is both a crime and unacceptable. The Council is committed to the welfare of its employees and will seek to support and assist any employee who is experiencing domestic abuse.

Flintshire County Council already has a role in the prevention of domestic abuse and support to victims through its involvement in the Community Safety Partnership(s). The Council also recognises the role it has to play as an employer in taking action to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are safe and feel supported at work.

Aims

The Council is committed to raising the awareness of domestic abuse and the issues facing victims. By introducing an effective workplace domestic abuse policy and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

Flintshire County Council recognises that domestic abuse is not a private matter and that it can impact greatly on an individual's working life. Domestic abuse is a workplace issue.

Scope

These guidelines apply to all employees employed by FCC, excluding staff who are employed by Schools Governing Bodies.

Definition

The Welsh Assembly National Domestic Abuse Strategy defines domestic abuse as:-

'The use of physical and/or emotional abuse or violence, including undermining of self confidence, sexual violence or the threat of violence, by any person, who is or has been in a close relationship with the victim, including abuse of parents or adult children' .

Policy Details

The Council has a duty of care to all its employees and has a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds. If an employee discloses that they are subjected to abusive behaviour, the Council will seek to provide information about the services and support networks available to them.

Any employee who is experiencing domestic abuse should be able to raise the matter confidentially in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support. This

support can be from colleagues, managers, Trade Unions, Occupational Health, the Council's Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator or any of the specialist agencies listed in Appendix 4.

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission. There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults or where the Council needs to act to protect the safety of employees. If it is decided to proceed in breaching confidentiality, after having taken advice, this should be explained to the employee and where possible the employee's agreement obtained.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

The Council will encourage the perpetrator, if also an employee of the Council, to seek appropriate advice from the FCC Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

If an employee wishes to report concerns about somebody who they think is suffering from domestic abuse, they will need to speak to their line manager, in the first instance, who will seek advice from the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator.

The Council have a role to play in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The main aim of the MARAC is to reduce the risk of serious harm or homicide for a domestic abuse victim and to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of other victims. Information can be shared when it is necessary to prevent a crime, protect the health and/or safety of the victim and/or the rights of freedoms of those who are victims of violence and/or their children.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed to ensure compliance with changes in employment legislation or recommended best practice. Any future amendments to the policy may be authorised by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

Training and Development

Training will be provided to ensure that employees and managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications for the workplace. Information, briefings or awareness raising sessions will ensure that all managers/employees are able to:

- Identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties of domestic abuse
- Respond to a disclosure in a sensitive and non judgemental manner
- Provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support
- Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning
- Signpost to other organisations and sources of support
- Understand the limitations of their role

The Council will ensure that information and sources of support are available in the workplace which can easily be accessed by all employees in confidence.

Procedure

Role of the Manager

Managers should be mindful of the signs of domestic abuse – outlined in Appendix 2.

Although a line manager may not be the first person to be approached for help by someone who is experiencing domestic abuse, the line manager may become involved through associated issues such as attendance management or poor performance. If you are a line manager, it is important to consider how you will deal with such a scenario before it occurs.

This guidance should also be followed when an employee discloses experiencing Domestic Abuse to another colleague.

There are a number of ways in which a manager can support an employee:

- Ensure that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in privacy and that their confidentiality is respected as far as possible.
- Employees who disclose experiencing abuse should be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.
- Inform the employee of the support networks available to them eg. The Council's Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, Occupational Health, the Trade Unions and specialist support agencies. A list of support agencies for men and women is attached to this policy.
- Where an employee discloses domestic abuse/violence, they should be encouraged to contact a specialist support agency (or the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator) who can undertake a DASH (Domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence) risk assessment – www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk) and make appropriate referrals where necessary.
- Employees should also be informed that there are some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured i.e. if a manager has concerns about the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults.
- In circumstances where it is felt it may be necessary to breach confidentiality, managers should seek specialist advice from the Council's Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator before doing so.
- The Manager will then work with the employee and a specialist agency to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, taking into account the duty of care for all their employees.
- If an employee discloses their abusive behaviour, the line manager will seek to provide information about the services and support available to them, and will encourage the perpetrator to seek advice and guidance from the FCC Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator or support agencies.

- In line with the terms and conditions of employment with the Council, employees are required to inform their line manager if they are charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence.
- Where perpetrators are employed in posts requiring a valid CRB disclosure, a caution or conviction relating to domestic abuse may have an adverse impact on their suitability to remain in that post.
- Any employee who threatens, harasses or abuses a partner or family member at, or from, the Council's workplace will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- Conduct outside work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) can also lead to disciplinary action against an employee because of its employment implications.
- In these circumstances the possibility of redeployment into an alternative role should be considered.

Support for the Employee

A list of support agencies can be found at the end of this policy – Appendix 4.

We recognise that those experiencing domestic abuse will need to feel comfortable about disclosing information regarding their circumstances. If an employee does not wish to talk to their manager about their situation in the first instance, they should feel able to approach colleagues, Trade Union representatives, HR, Occupational Health or the Council's Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator. In order to support the employee appropriately in the workplace, the manager may need to be involved at a later stage.

In order to deal with the issues relating to Domestic Abuse, employees will almost certainly need to take time off work to attend appointments. Often such appointments will be during normal working hours and may include:

- Appointments with support agencies such as Women's Aid, Social Services or counsellors.
- Meetings in relation to housing or accommodation issues
- Meetings with solicitors
- Attending criminal or civil court proceedings.
- Making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools.

There are a number of existing policies that can be utilised once a disclosure has been made that may reduce the need to take unplanned time away from work. Managers are expected to respond positively and sympathetically to such requests under these circumstances.

Examples of utilising current policies could include:

- Allowing employees to take some annual holiday in hours to accommodate appointments during working hours

- Adjusting starting and finishing times to allow pre-planned appointments
- Adjustments to flexi time to allow pre-planned appointments

Other related absence may not be planned and managers should be mindful of the Special Leave policy which grants paid time off to deal with sudden unforeseen family emergencies.

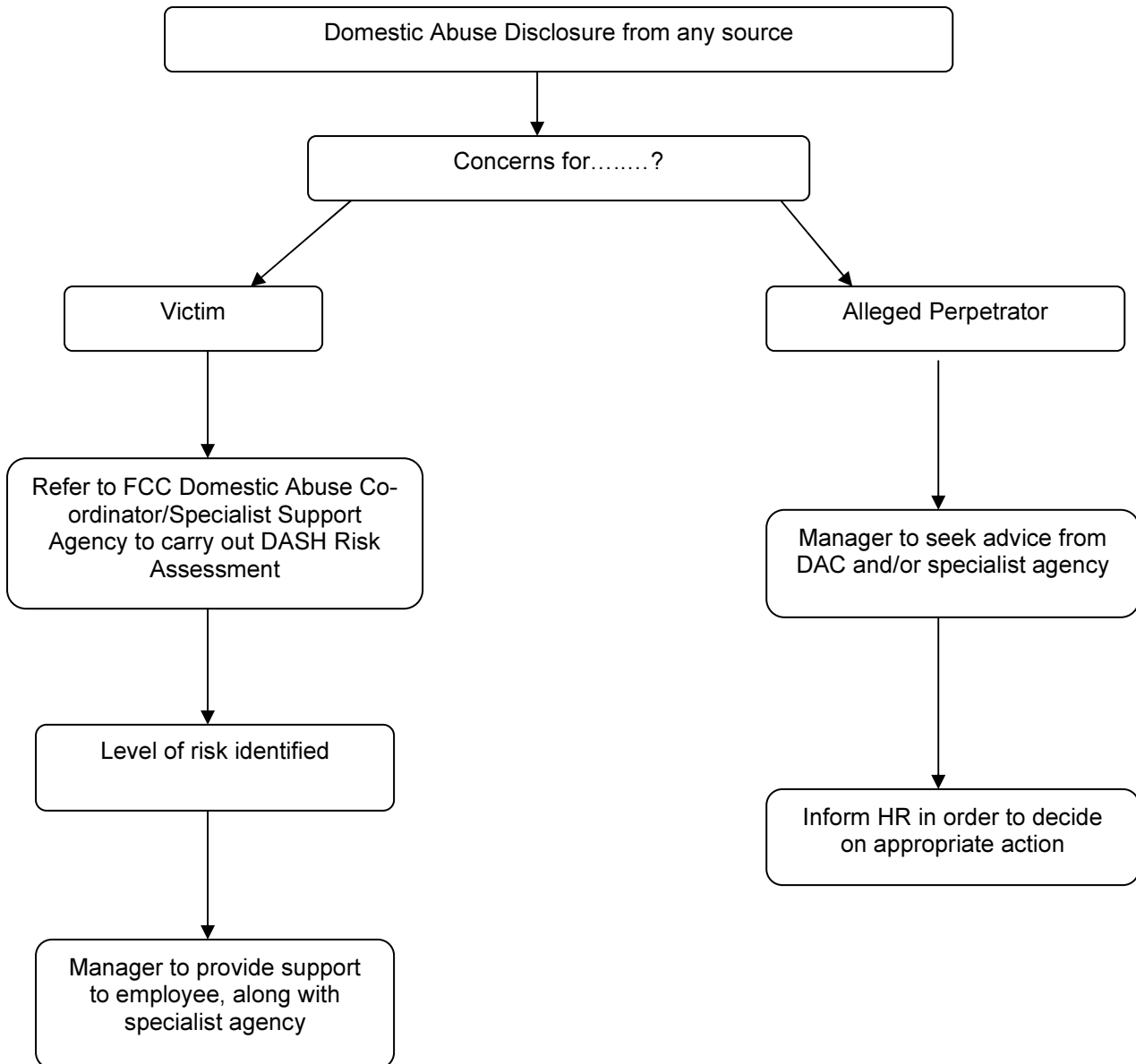
Employees may also wish to consider the Agile Working Policy and the Flexible Working policy if changing their working arrangements would be beneficial, ie, change to hours, working days.

The line manager must protect the health and safety of the employee while they are in work and it may be necessary and reasonable to make temporary or permanent adjustments to working arrangements, if requested/agreed by the employee. These could include:

- Changes to working times and patterns e.g. changing starting and finishing time or lunch breaks
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- Redeployment or relocation
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Access to counselling/support services in paid time

Appendix 1

Pathway following disclosure of Domestic Abuse involving FCC employee



Appendix 2

You may be experiencing Domestic Abuse.....Does your partner/ex partner/family member behave in the following way?

- Are they jealous and possessive?
- Do they cut you off from family and friends and try to isolate you?
- Are they charming one minute and abusive the next? Do they have sudden changes of mood – like Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde?
- Do they control your life – for example, money, who you should see, what you should wear?
- Do they monitor your movements?
- Do they blame you for the abuse?
- Do they humiliate or insult you in front of others?
- Do they verbally abuse you?
- Do they constantly criticise?
- Do they use anger and intimidation to frighten and make you comply with their demands?
- Do they tell you you're useless and couldn't cope without them?
- Have they threatened to hurt you or people close to you if they leave?
- Do they force you to have sex when you don't want to?

How to spot signs and symptoms of Domestic Abuse in the workplace

The effects of domestic abuse can often lead to work place concerns which may be observed by work colleagues and/or line managers. These may include reduced performance, increased absenteeism, lateness and signs of stress.

Research shows that:

- 56% of abused employees arrive late for work at least five times a month
- 28% leave early at least five days a month
- 53% miss at least three days of work a month

Other signs that may indicate some form of domestic abuse include:

- repeatedly attending work with injuries
- receiving a high number of telephone calls from work/ strong reactions to calls from home
- being secretive about home life
- emotional reactions, cycles of depression
- partners exercising high levels of control over work and/ or life

Those who suffer domestic abuse at home may be targeted at work; they may receive unwanted phone calls or text messages and may even be assaulted on their way in to work or on the way home.

Any employee who suspects a colleague, service user, or member of the public that may be experiencing domestic abuse should seek advice from the Councils Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator or from one of the support agencies listed in Appendix 4.

General Facts about Domestic Abuse

One in four women and one in seven men will experience domestic abuse during their lifetime.

Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, mental or physical ability.

Domestic abuse includes more than actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional/psychological abuse, the destruction of a spouse's or partner's property, their isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone, honour based violence, forced marriage and stalking.

Domestic abuse is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victim.

Nationally, crimes associated with Domestic Abuse account for almost a quarter of all violent crime in the UK.

In Flintshire more than 2348 incidents were recorded in 2012, 77.1% of victims were female.

Research shows that 75% of those experiencing domestic abuse, as well as suffering abuse at home, are also targeted at work.

Common Myths about Domestic Abuse and Work

Myth 1

Domestic abuse is about an employee's personal life and has no impact on my business.

Fact: Domestic abuse has an impact on the financial strength and success of the organisations for which its victims work. Domestic violence leads to decreased productivity and poor performance, erratic attendance and absenteeism, and employee turnover.

Myth 2

Domestic abuse victims are safe at work

Fact: Research indicates that nearly 75 per cent of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work - from harassing phone calls and abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced, to physical assaults. Once a person leaves an abusive partner they are especially vulnerable at work, as it may be the only place they can be located or harmed. Also, many people meet their partners at work. If both perpetrator and victim work for the same organisation, there are more opportunities for victims to be targeted there.

Simple, practical measures such as alerting security personnel, varying start and finish times or providing a mobile phone can assist in thwarting perpetrators and help to protect victims.

Myth 3

Supporting victims will mean turning our managers or HR staff into Social workers

Fact: It's not necessary for organisations to have specialised expertise in house; employees can be referred to domestic abuse helplines or other sources of advice. By being aware of how domestic abuse can affect staff and being ready to make adjustments to assist them, employers can complement this specialist help with practical support.

Myth 4

Domestic abuse is only an issue for women

Fact: Domestic abuse can happen to men as well as women and men in same sex relationships are just as likely to become victims. However it is true that more women than men are victims, including the majority of repeat victims. Domestic abuse does not only harm the victim. Parents, children, siblings and friends can also be profoundly affected – including their work. Abuse against children can often take place at the same time as abuse against a woman. A conservative estimate is that in 40% of cases of domestic abuse, the abuser is abusing both his partner and his children. Children and young people living with domestic abuse are significantly affected.

DOMESTIC ABUSE -SOURCES OF HELP

Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline

The helpline offers a 24-hour, bilingual, freephone helpline information and signposting service to women, men and children that are experiencing domestic abuse.

Tel: 0808 80 10 800

Web: www.wdah.org.uk

Delyn Womens Aid

Refuge and outreach support for women and children escaping domestic abuse.

Tel: 01352 712150

Dyn Wales Helpline – 0808 801 0321

The Dyn Project provides accessible support to all men who experience domestic abuse in Wales regardless of age; gender; race; religion or sexual orientation.

C.A.L.L. Helpline – 0800 132 737

Community Advice and Listening Line Wales

Provide information on services, local or national, which may help sufferers of mental health distress, including people suffering from any type of abuse as well as their friends, family, carers or relatives.

Unison Welfare

Provide confidential service offering advice and support for Unison members and their families.

Tel: 020 7551 1620

Email: welfare@unison.co.uk

Web: www.unison.org.uk

Broken Rainbow UK

Broken Rainbow UK is a National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline providing confidential support to all members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities, their family and friends, and agencies supporting them.

Tel: 0300 999 5428

Web: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

North Wales RASA (Rape & Sexual Assault Service)

Rape and sexual support centre provides services for males and females aged 14+ who have experienced any of the following:- domestic abuse including physical, emotional and sexual, rape and ritual abuse.

Tel: 01286 669266

PO Box 87, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 9AA

North Wales Sexual Assault Referral Centre

One stop shop supporting adult and child victims of rape and/or sexual abuse.

Tel: 01492 805384

1 Bryn Eirias Close, Colwyn Bay

Choose2Change Domestic Violence Intervention Programme

If you are worried about the future of your relationship – are you worried, scared or ashamed by the way you sometimes treat your partner? If you are ready to do something about it then Choose2Change.

Tel: 01492 532503

Email: kelly@choose2change.org.uk

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop bringing together the services most needed by victims/survivors of domestic abuse into a single location.

Tel: 01244 830436

Web: www.domesticabusesafetyunit.net

Chester Road, Shotton, Deeside

Positive Outlook Service

Supports people whose experiences of domestic abuse have led to problems with tenancy. Assists victims/ survivors to remain safe within their own homes.

Tel: 01244 845506

Victoria Roberts – Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA)

Buckley Town Council, Mold Rd, Buckley, CH7 2JB

Email: idva.flintshire@btconnect.com

Flintshire Housing Options Team

Housing options are able to provide advice and assistance on temporary accommodation, target hardening, homeless legislation and so on.

Tel: 01352 703815

Domestic Abuse Safety Unit

Refuge and resettlement/outreach support, counselling, support and advice to women and men experiencing domestic abuse

Tel: 01244 830436

The KIM Project

Offers support to women with mental health issues

Tel: 01352 41908

P O Box 106, Mold, CH7 5ZB

Young Peoples Counselling Service (YPCS)

Text 80800 and start your message YPCS (free texts)

Tel. 01244 846742

Email: ypcs@flintshire.gov.uk

Hafan Cymru

Provides housing and support services to women men and children – particularly those experiencing domestic abuse.

Tel: 01978 823077

Web: www.hafan.cymru.co.uk

Hafan Cymru, Midland Bank Chambers, High Street, Ruabon, Wrexham, LL14 6AA

Flintshire HomeSafe

Flintshire Homesafe is available to all victims of domestic abuse who are threatened with attack or personal harm (including harassment) or damage to their property.
Tel: 01352 701818