

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Policy and Resources Committee - 10 December 2007

REPORT ON: Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse

REPORT BY: Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

REPORT NO.: 627-2007

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval to the proposed Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- approves the Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse (attached as Appendix 1);
- notes that the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) will submit a report in one year's time in relation to the implementation and effect of this Policy.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any period of unpaid leave will incur a cost for Council departments, however, support at a crucial time may result in potential savings in the longer term.

4 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 Domestic Abuse is a serious health issue and occurs in all social groups. The effects of domestic abuse include physical injury, mental ill health, physical ill health, homelessness, fear and low self-esteem. It is difficult to know how many individuals suffer domestic abuse but research shows that it is widespread and under reported.

It is generally accepted that at least 1 in 5 women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime (Scottish Executive, 2000). In Dundee in 2005/06 there were 2,078 incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police, an increase of over 15% from the previous year. This means that Dundee has the highest reported prevalence of domestic abuse in Scotland, with 1,462 reported incidents per 100,000 population.

- 4.2 Domestic abuse is a national priority that was set out by the Scottish Executive's National Strategy on Domestic Abuse in 2001. This strategy emphasises that tackling domestic abuse requires the collaboration of a number of agencies, including Local Authorities, all accepting a shared responsibility. The National Strategy on Domestic Abuse has been followed by a national training strategy and national prevention strategy which outline the need for employers to recognise and respond adequately to the presence of domestic abuse within the workplace/workforce.
- 4.3 As a large employer, Dundee City Council acknowledges that some Council employees will be experiencing domestic abuse and is committed to providing appropriate support for employees.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Risk Management and Equality Impact Assessment.

There are no major issues.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Council Management Team and the trade unions have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

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Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

29 November 2007

Draft**WORKPLACE POLICY ON DOMESTIC ABUSE****INTRODUCTION**

Dundee City Council recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue which occurs across all society and can have a damaging effect on the mental and physical health of an individual who is experiencing domestic abuse.

Instances of domestic abuse can affect people's work performance and in some cases, threats and acts of domestic abuse may carry over into the workplace.

The Council recognises that as an employer it has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare at work of all our employees and is committed to providing support for employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. Assisting and supporting individuals to resolve difficulties in their personal life will have a positive effect on their performance at work.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aims of the policy are:-

- a) to assist and support managers to identify and deal in an appropriate manner with employees experiencing domestic abuse;
- b) to assist and support employees who seek help in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse and ensure that these employees are responded to quickly, positively, and in confidence.

DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

For the purpose of this policy, domestic abuse is defined as the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one adult person over another adult within the context of an intimate relationship. Such abuse may manifest itself in a variety of ways including physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual violence and abuse, financial control and abuse, and the imposition of social isolation and movement deprivation. Whilst the majority of individuals who experience domestic abuse are women, this policy applies equally to men and women and to same sex relationships.

DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

Domestic abuse will almost certainly have an impact on the performance at work of the employee experiencing domestic abuse and therefore have a direct effect on the quality of service provision. Where appropriate, action may be taken against a perpetrator, employed by the Council, whose conduct raises questions as to his/her suitability for his/her type of work.

Domestic abuse manifests itself in a variety of ways and may include:-

- Lateness
- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Absenteeism
- Poor work performance
- Behavioural change
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence

SUPPORT MEASURES

The Personnel Department will provide advice, assistance and support to individual employees and managers in interpreting and applying the Council's Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse. To facilitate such discussions as outlined below, an employee may wish to be supported by a colleague or trade union representative.

Paid Time Off

Up to one day's paid leave may be granted where an employee is required to urgently flee to a safe place, eg refuge, without prior planning. This is a one-off arrangement.

An employee should discuss the situation with his/her line manager who will decide whether paid time off is appropriate. Any further paid time off is at the discretion of the Chief Officer after due consideration.

Time Off to Attend Solicitor/Other Agencies

Where an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, the Council will adopt a sympathetic approach, taking all factors into account, with a view to allowing the employee to attend appointments with solicitors and/or other agencies. This may involve waiving the core times of the flexi time system to attend an appointment, unpaid special leave, allowing an employee to work back time, etc.

An employee should discuss the situation with his/her line manager who will consider suitable options. Arrangements must be approved and agreed by the line manager.

Flexible Working

Change of Workplace

An employee may request a temporary change of workplace. This request should be put in writing to the manager who will consider the request and respond within 14 days.

Change to Working Arrangements

An employee may request a temporary or permanent change to his/her working arrangements under the Council's Flexible Working Policy.

Advance of Pay

An employee experiencing financial hardship during a period of domestic abuse should explain the situation to his/her line manager and may request an advance of their salary/wage. The employee's line manager will seek the approval of the Head of Department and the Head of Finance.

Counselling/Support

An employee should explain the situation to his/her manager and may request counselling which may be arranged by his/her line manager by contacting the Personnel Department.

A list of agencies dealing with domestic abuse is attached as Appendix 3.

Safety at Work

The employee may suffer harassment from the perpetrator of the domestic abuse whilst they are at work. He/she should inform his/her manager if this happens or is likely to happen.

Personal alarms can be requested if the employee is worried that their partner/relative may try to contact or follow him/her, especially if lone working.

Arrangements should be put in place to ensure colleagues are aware that personal information should not be given out unless express authority is given by the employee experiencing domestic abuse.

Where appropriate, a risk assessment should be carried out by management. This assessment will include travel to work, work on the premises, breaks, etc. Where the two parties both work for the Council the situation may be more complex and advice should be sought from Personnel.

Provision of Temporary Mobile Phones for Emergency Use

An employee may contact his/her line manager who will assess the situation and make appropriate arrangements, if necessary.

INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Implementation of the policy will be accompanied by training for line managers to raise awareness of the issues surrounding domestic abuse and to provide guidance on identifying and dealing with instances of domestic abuse which become apparent in the workplace.

Guidance for managers is attached as Appendix 1.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) in consultation with the trade unions in light of experience gained from its operation.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Physical

- Unexpected burns or bruises, areas of superficial reddening of the skin consistent with slaps, injuries in various stages of healing or chronic injuries.
- Injuries in areas of the body inconsistent with falls, walking into doors or other explanations given.
- Injuries to the breasts, chest and abdomen - women are more likely to be injured in these areas and are common injuries during pregnancy.
- Injuries to face, head or neck.
- Frequent unexplained visits to doctor - explained with vague symptoms.
- Frequent use of pain medications.

Emotional

- Panic attacks/anxiety/depression.
- Exhibits severe stress reactions.
- Emotional exhaustion, lack of emotional control.
- Impaired thinking.
- Decreased concentration/attention span.
- Eruption of aggressiveness, anger out of context.
- Alcohol/drug abuse.
- Frequent use of minor tranquillizers.

Behavioural

- Person may be frightened, evasive, ashamed or embarrassed.
- Startle response is elevated.
- Withdrawn and quiet due to feelings of isolation.
- Low self esteem/confidence.

Other

- Unusual number of calls from home and strong reaction to these calls.
- Comes to work late and needs to leave early.
- Secretive about home life.
- Partner may attempt to limit their work or social contacts.
- Partner may ridicule them in public.
- Partner exerts unusual amount of control over their life.

Remember

- Domestic abuse is fundamentally a process of psychological intimidation. The threats and humiliations perpetrated by the abuser are often more significant than the physical violence.

- Domestic abuse is controlling behaviour and includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional aspects within all kinds of intimate relationships. This may include:
 - Physical assault
 - Sexual abuse
 - Rape
 - Destructive criticism
 - Pressure tactics
 - Disrespect
 - Breaking trust
 - Harassment
 - Abusers may offer 'rewards' on certain conditions.
- Offering basic information about services is very helpful whether they are used immediately or not. An individual experiencing domestic abuse may be unaware that they need or deserve these services because they probably minimise the abuse.
- Pressuring the individual to leave the abuser is NOT helpful. Violence usually escalates after separation and during pregnancy. Leaving the situation is a step that should be carefully planned after support has been sought.

APPENDIX 2**GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH STAFF INVOLVED IN DOMESTIC ABUSE**

The aim of these guidelines is to develop practices to support staff within Dundee City Council who may be involved in any incidents of domestic abuse. These guidelines will be supported by more in-depth training for appropriate line managers.

When dealing with an individual who has experienced/is experiencing domestic abuse:

DO:

- Find a safe place to talk.
- Check if they are comfortable to talk to you or would they prefer someone else.
- Reassure that what is said is kept confidential explaining that actions will need to be taken if there is anything which may put the health and wellbeing of children at risk or where the individual is in danger of life threatening violence.
- Be sensitive and discuss their fears.
- Accept what is being said as the truth.
- Check/agree with the individual if it is beneficial to find a safe alternative contact address.
- Keep your personal opinions to yourself/do not be judgmental.
- Remember that their options may be limited by lack of access to resources and/or support.
- Consider with the individual how best the organisation can help and what other organisations may be of assistance.

DO NOT:

- Expect too much - they may not want you to take action and just want to talk.
- Mislead the individual into believing you can do more than you realistically can as their Manager.
- Give his or her address or phone number to anyone or reveal a refuge address to anyone including Payroll. Do not therefore put her/his current address or phone number on documents that others will have access to.
- Set pre-conditions for supporting them.
- Rush them to make a decision or force them to take action.
- Act as a go-between.

APPENDIX 3**DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES - DUNDEE**

Organisation	Helpline	Office
Barnardo's Tayside Domestic Abuse Initiative		01382 206715
Tayside Police		01382 223200
Tayside Police - Domestic Abuse Unit	01382 591912	01382 591912
Victim Support - Dundee	0845 3030900	01382 305707
Women's Aid - Dundee	01382 202525	01382 202525
Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	01382 201291	01382 205556

OTHER USEFUL SERVICES - DUNDEE

Organisation	Helpline	Office
Age Concern Dundee	01382 825624	01382 825624
Alternatives (Dundee Crisis Pregnancy Trust)	01382 221112	01382 507766
Barnardo's Family Support Team	01382 224924	01382 224924
Barnardo's Polepark Family Service - FACE		01382 432931 01382 432938
Barnardo's Space Project		01382 436621
Children 1st	0808 800 2222	01382 322436
Corner, The	01382 206060	01382 206060
Council Offices - Housing	01382 436430	
Council Offices - Social Work	01382 436430	01382 435106
CRUISE Bereavement Care Scotland - Dundee	01382 305714	01382 305714
Dundee Association for Mental Health		01382 227288
Dundee Blind and Partially Sighted		01382 227101
Dundee Drug and Aids Project		01382 200532
Dundee Repertory Theatre Expressive Arts for Health & Healing		01382 342662
Dundee Sitter Service		01382 502504
Dundee Women & Children Project		01382 201854
Eighteen and Under		01382 206222
Key to Change		01382 227400 01382 200532
NCS Dundee (National Counselling Service)		01382 305720
Rollercoaster		01382 436621
Samaritans, The	08457 909090	01382 832555
Scottish Association for Mental Health		01382 904044
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) - Dundee		01382 660111
Wishart Centre		01382 461221
Youth Link (Dundee)		01382 224063

TAYSIDE-WIDE ORGANISATIONS

Organisation	Helpline	Office
Age Concern	0845 125 9732	01382 305710
Body Positive Tayside		01382 461555
Caledonia Youth	01382 229613	01382 229613
Couple Counselling Tayside	01382 640340	01382 640123
Family Mediation Tayside		01382 201343
National Deaf Children's Society Tayside Reg Assoc		01821 642350
One Parent Families Scotland		01382 501972
Parent to Parent Tayside	01382 455200	01382 455200
Scottish Drugs Forum - Tayside		01382 305752
Shelter Housing Aid Centre	0808 800 4444	01382 225544
SSAFA Forces Help (Angus and Perth & Kinross branch)		01738 623214
Tayside Alcohol Problem Service		01674 830 361 x225
Tayside Association for the Deaf		01382 221124
Tayside Council on Alcohol		01382 223965
Victim Information and Advice		01382 341180
Web Project, The		01382 458128