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**Domestic Violence Guidance**

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**1. Purpose**

1.1 The Council is committed to supporting employees who are the victims of domestic violence (DV) or any other form of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

 It will take appropriate action against employees who are perpetrators of it and/or provide information about services that can help them with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

**2. Executive Summary**

2.1 Information about VAWG/domestic violence is unlikely to be disclosed easily by someone experiencing or committing it. An employer that is proactive in VAWG/tackling domestic violence may find that employees become more likely to disclose it. But often it may only be identified through monitoring of sickness, attendance and work performance.

2.2 Identification of VAWG/domestic violence at an early stage can lead to appropriate help and support being offered which can reduce prolonged or repeated suffering. It can help reduce sick absence and the resultant burden and stress on colleagues. Integration of the response to VAWG/domestic violence with policies around sickness management and work performance will help to avoid taking inappropriate action against staff.

2.3 Taking a proactive stance on domestic violence means developing consistency about supporting members of staff through their difficulties.

**3. Scope**

3.1 Domestic violence is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are, or who have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can include forced social isolation, or abuse inflicted upon or threatened to be inflicted upon children or other family members. 3.2 Most often domestic violence is committed by men against women, but it also happens in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender relationships. Sometimes women abuse men and sometimes other family members may be involved.

VAWG is “any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [or girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty’

 These include **Sexual Violence, trafficking, prostitution, child sexual exploitation including in a gang context, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, so called ‘honour’ based violence, dowry related abuse, stalking and harassment.**

**4. Process and Procedure**

**4.1. Responding Sensitively to Employees Experiencing Domestic Violence**

4.1.1 Managers may be in the role of trying to encourage a member of staff to disclose VAWG/domestic violence, and need to develop a sensitive and non-judgemental approach. A member of staff may voluntarily or due to circumstances, admit a situation at home because of the effect on their attendance at work, or the fact that they have come into work with visible injuries. They may well try to play down the situation or later deny what they have said, particularly if they feel that it may be held against them or there are concerns about the risk of significant harm to a child that a manager may have a duty to report.

4.1.2 Managers may find it helpful to consider:

* Ensuring privacy for any conversations about the issues, using an office or room where interruptions can be avoided.
* Respecting confidentiality.
* Being non-judgemental and sensitive.
* Understanding why someone might be reluctant to approach their line manager, and may involve a third party, such as a colleague or a Trade union representative.
* Additional issues faced by women because of their ethnic background, age, sexuality, class etc., but not stereotyping or making assumptions based on this.
* Offering the option of speaking to a female or male member of staff where appropriate. It may be appropriate to involve Human Resources.
* Signposting in terms of legal rights, benefits, refuges, counselling, legal and welfare advice available through some Trade Unions and local services and how to access them. This can enable the member of staff to make their own choices and changes in their lives, and have a positive impact on their work and safety at work.
* Reassuring the person 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 well-being of children at risk or where the victim is in danger of life threatening violence.
* How best the Council can help and what other organisations may be of assistance.
* Suggesting that the employee can contact the Tower Hamlets domestic violence team for advice and guidance

4.1.3 Managers may discuss referring the member of staff to the Occupational Health Unit, where counselling or other support may be recommended if appropriate. Staff who are absent from work due to domestic violence will be subject to the Council’s Sickness Management Procedure and managers are expected to use meetings to offer care and support to the member of staff.

4.1.4 Managers should consider personal circumstances when managing an employee’s sickness absence and ensure that the Council discharges its responsibilities in such cases.  Managers should refer to the Council’s guidance/policy documents and seek advice from their HR & WD Business Partner.

4.1.5 Perpetrators of VAWG/domestic violence may, on occasions, make allegations against the employee with a view to the Council initiating disciplinary action. Accordingly managers should be mindful that this could be a deliberate strategy to inflict harm and that more detailed informal enquiries may be required before considering initiating disciplinary action.

4.1.6 The Council recognises the impact of VAWG/domestic violence on an employee’s abilities to carry out their duties, attend work regularly and maintain good working relationships with colleagues. The Council fully accepts its responsibility to safeguard the individual as well as fellow employees.

**4.2 Practical Measures to Consider With the Employee at Risk**

4.2.1 The Manager should carry out a risk assessment with the member of staff, and consider any changes that might be appropriate. For example:

* Offering temporary changes in workplace, work times and patterns, which can reduce the level of risk for the member of staff at work and on their journeys to and from the workplace.
* Offering short term help such as accompanying them to the bus stop, phoning to check that they arrived home safely etc.
* Job redeployment, or changes in specific duties, such as whether to answer phones, work in isolated situations or staff reception areas, or carry out duties that would put the member of staff at a higher risk of injury.
* Discussing practicalities: how will calls from the perpetrator will be dealt with? Agreeing with the consent of the victim what to tell colleagues. For example how they should respond if the perpetrator rings or calls at the workplace, how to alert colleagues of a problem (e.g. alarms), etc.
* Recommend referral to the Occupational Health Unit.
* Ensuring that the member of staff is aware of external sources of advice and support.
* Consider granting Special Leave. Seek advice from your HR & WD Business Partner about this issue.

4.2.2 Where an alleged perpetrator is employed by the Council, your HR and WD Business Partner should be informed to allow consideration of HR action (including disciplinary action potentially resulting in dismissal) in respect of the alleged perpetrator. **However, under no circumstances should you attempt to mediate between parties or discuss the disclosure with the alleged perpetrator.**

**4.3 General Safety Issues**

4.3.1 Management should ensure that all staff are aware that personal information should not be given to anyone phoning or visiting the workplace.

4.3.2 Regularly review whether security measures such as keypads or access procedures need to be changed in case the access codes have become known.

4.3.3 Noting and recording where staffare located during the day, particularly if work duties include spending a lot of time out of the workplace.

4.3.4 The Council is committed to ensuring that practical support is made available, subject to the needs of the service and will encourage managers to adopt a sensitive, flexible and pragmatic approach to meeting the needs of employees who have caring responsibilities in accordance with their individual circumstances.

**5. Monitoring**

5.1 The Council will monitor how effectively this policy works and will review this policy annually.

**6. Further Information**

**External Support Agencies:**

* Police (Non-emergency) 101
* National Domestic Violence Helpline (24hr) 0808 2000 247
* Victim Support Tower Hamlets 020 7364 2448/7957
* National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 999 5428
* Early Help Hub (concerns regarding children) 020 7364 5744

(10am – 1pm)

* Child Protection Advice Line 020 7364 3444
* East London Rape Crisis 0800 160 1036
* The Havens (Rape & Sexual Assault) 020 3299 6900
* Reset (Drugs & Alcohol Services) 020 8121 5301
* Men’s Advice Line 0808 801 0327
* NSPCC Child Protection Line 0808 800 5000
* Respect (Help for Perpetrators) 0808 802 4040
* Rights of Women (Legal Advice) 020 7608 1137
* Women’s Trust (Counselling) 020 7034 0303
* Tower Hamlets Domestic Violence 020 7364 4986

One Stop Shop

Idea Store, 321 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BU

(Thursdays only, 9.30 am – 12.30pm)

* Shelter London Advice Service 0344 515 1540
* Housing Options 020 7364 7474
* Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours Service) 020 7364 7070

**In an emergency, call 999 for police or ambulance service**

**Internal Support:**

* Your manager (including referrals to Occupational Health to access counselling)
* Tower Hamlets VAWG, Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime Team - 0800 279 5434 or via email on domestic.violence@towerhamlets.gov.uk
* ESCW Directorate Childrens Services
* Human Resources
* Trade unions