

## Addressing Domestic Violence & Abuse at Work- Our Commitment and Policy

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. As an organisation, we're committed to ensuring everyone can bring their best self to work. We understand the devastating impact of domestic violence & abuse (DVA) on a person's physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Through this policy, we want to:
- Create a supportive and productive work environment that helps employees to avoid the use of violence in any context
  - Institutionalise responsive policies and procedures to assist employees who are affected by violence, including the provision of training to employees and management
  - Consider disciplinary action to hold alleged perpetrators of violence accountable for their behaviour
  - Provide immediate assistance and support to victims of violence, such as information and referrals to community resources, to facilitate safety and support for victims and fellow employees.

### 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all permanent and fixed term staff directly employed by the Council and we encourage schools, agencies and voluntary organisations affiliated with the Council to adopt this as best practice.
- 2.2. We recognise that there are differing views on the use of the words 'victim' and/or 'survivor'. Throughout this policy we will be using the term 'victim', in recognition of the fact that a person experiencing domestic violence and abuse is a victim of a crime. However, we understand that some may prefer the term 'survivor' to emphasise the strength and resilience needed to overcome the crime against them.
- 2.3. DVA is often a hidden crime that can happen to anyone regardless of their background. The figures show that almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse (ONS, 2019), but we also know that men can experience abuse, and people who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who have a disability may be at higher risk.

### 3. Definition of domestic violence and abuse

- 3.1. Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass (but is not limited to) the following types of abuse:
- Psychological: which can be verbal or non-verbal and could be the way an abuser looks at their victim to intimidate them. Its aim is to chip away at the confidence and independence of victims with the intention of making them compliant and limiting their ability to leave.
  - Physical: which can include kicking, punching, strangling, slapping, biting, pinching, pulling hair, burning and throwing items including household objects.
  - Sexual: includes rape, unwanted sexual demands or touching, and being purposely hurt during sex.





- Financial: includes taking away bank cards, asking for an unreasonable account of all money spent, preventing someone from working or controlling all income, sabotaging someone's job, taking out debts in the victim's name.
- Emotional: includes verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming and shaming, belittling, denying that the abuse is happening and accusing the victim

*(Definitions from 'Everyone's Business')*

- 3.2. Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person feel subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resilience and escape by regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 3.3. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and it is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.
- 3.4. It's important to recognise abuse can take place regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity and expression, pregnancy, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or marital status.
- 3.5. Domestic violence and abuse is about power and control of an individual's behaviour by partners or family members. Forms of domestic violence are not discrete strands; they are often connected in a continuum of abuse. Victims often experience more than one form of this violence at any one time or during their experience of abuse.

#### **4. Indicators**

- 4.1. It is not always easy to detect when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse as not all forms of violence are physical or visible. We recognise the strength and courage it takes to disclose if a person is experiencing domestic abuse as victims often feel a sense of 'shame'. As an organisation, we want to lift the stigma associated with domestic abuse as this can often lead to the victim not feeling able to disclose or ask for help.
- 4.2. We encourage managers and all employees to look out for the following signs to help create a supportive atmosphere for victims. The indicators below may point towards potential domestic abuse, but they could also be the result of a different issue such as, ill health. It's important to not make any assumptions. Use core skills of questioning, listening, empathy and reflection to help colleagues feel comfortable in sharing their experiences of domestic abuse.

 <b>Work productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in the person's working patterns, for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early</li> <li>• Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards</li> <li>• 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/emails</li> <li>• Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason</li> <li>• Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may indicate coercive control</li> </ul>	 <b>Changes in behaviour or demeanour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct out of character with previous behaviour</li> <li>• Changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet, anxious, fearful, tearful, aggressive, distracted or depressed.</li> <li>• Being isolated from colleagues</li> <li>• Obsession with leaving work on time</li> <li>• Secretive regarding home life</li> <li>• Worried about leaving children at home</li> </ul>
 <b>Physical Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible bruising, single or repeated injuries without explanation</li> <li>• Change in the pattern or amount of makeup used</li> <li>• Change in the manner of dress, for example clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries</li> <li>• Substance use/misuse</li> <li>• Fatigue/sleep disorders/lethargy</li> <li>• Frequent bouts of sickness, particularly related to digestive or immune health</li> </ul>	 <b>Other Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner/ex-partner stalking employee in or around workplace or on social media</li> <li>• Partner/ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule</li> <li>• Isolation from family/friends.</li> <li>• Continuity issues such as regularly being late, or seeming to be unable to keep to time (not knowing what time of day it is, or what day in the week etc.)</li> <li>• May be overly compliant – agreeing to everything you suggest for example.</li> </ul>

## 5. Impact of violence and abuse

5.1. We recognise that within the workforce, there are those who have experienced violence in their personal or professional lives and those who may be perpetrators of violence. Violence and abuse has a negative impact on a workforce as a whole, it affects the wider team morale, productivity and performance.

5.2. Impact of violence and abuse on the workforce includes:

- Direct impact on productivity at work due to physical or psychological abuse
- Absenteeism due to injuries such as chronic pain, vision or hearing loss and the psychological impacts of domestic violence such as anxiety, depression, post - traumatic stress disorder and or use of alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.
- Time off as a result of having to seek help from solicitors, doctors or specialist support agencies
- Lateness as a result of the abuser trying to prevent a member of staff from going to work

- Harassment in the workplace: perpetrators of domestic violence may target a victim at work. This can include numerous telephone calls, emails, and the abuser turning up at the workplace or leaving unwelcome notes on the victim's car.

5.3. Domestic abuse also affects people close to the victim and this can include work colleagues. Other staff members may:

- Have to cover or fill in for absent or non-productive colleagues
- Try to shield the victim from unwanted communication (phone calls, emails or visits)
- Feel helpless and unsure about how and/or when to intervene
- Feel distracted or disinterested from their own work
- Experience a negative impact on their own mental health, especially if they are being abused themselves or have previous experience of being abused
- Experience vicarious trauma.

5.4. In addition to the negative effects domestic abuse can have on an individual's work-life, the Council acknowledges the difficulty victims can face when trying to leave an abusive relationship (intimate or familial). There are a number of factors that can impact a victim's ability to step away which managers and employees should also understand. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Fear of retaliation by the perpetrator
- Being threatened e.g. perpetrator saying they will take children away, or threaten to 'out' someone who is LGBTQ+ without permission
- Blaming themselves or feeling guilt due to the dehumanising impact of violence
- Financial control and/or implications of leaving

## **6. Manager responsibilities**

6.1. The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself, but to make it clear that employees will be supported and outline what help is available. We appreciate that sometimes it may be difficult to seek support from your manager so we encourage employees to speak to their head of service if they feel uncomfortable about raising any concerns with their direct line manager. The following steps set out how the Council expects managers and heads of services to assist victims of domestic violence:

6.2. Acknowledge the problem:

- Intervene at an early stage. If you notice sudden changes in behaviour or work performance or if concerns raised by other staff, proactively speak to the employee about the situation in a private space. Begin by asking open questions to establish trust and empathy, take an open and comforting approach and do not be judgemental.

6.3. Respond:

- Listen to the employee, and allow plenty of time and space for them to speak. If they disclose that they are experiencing domestic violence do not ask for proof and remind them that it will be treated with complete confidentiality (see section 7). Reassure the employee that the organisation understands domestic violence can affect their work and that support can be offered.

#### 6.4. Provide support:

- Arrange telephone diversions and change of extension if the employee is experiencing harassing calls where possible/appropriate
- Agree with the employee what, if anything, to tell colleagues about how they should respond if an ex or partner or other abusive family member telephones or visits the workplace
- Ensure reception or security staff are trained not to divulge information about staff, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or work patterns and alerting them (with the individual's consent) if the perpetrator(s) is known to come to the workplace
- Recording any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent phone calls e-mails or visits, to a member of staff by their abuser(s). Details of any witnesses to these incidents should also be noted. These records could be used if the member of staff wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator
- Take account of any lone working arrangements that would leave the employee vulnerable
- Discuss ways the service can be flexible with workload/ arrangements whilst the employee takes steps to address the situation for example, allowing the employee to use their work email to reach out to support agencies to avoid the perpetrator finding out.
- Agree special leave arrangements to allow the employee to attend appointments e.g. court, moving house and other related appointments
- Keep all information strictly confidential (subject to child and adult responsibilities).

#### 6.5. Refer:

- Direct the employee towards appropriate professional help and provide continued support
- Take appropriate action under our policies and procedures, in accordance with the guidelines for dealing with domestic violence in the workplace. This may include speaking with HR to initiate disciplinary action against the perpetrator of DVA where they are our employee.

- Regularly check in with the employee once you have referred them to specialist help. Consider social activities or changes in workload to help the employee re-integrate into work.
- Continue to review the situation and understand that work can be a 'safe haven' for victims of domestic abuse.

## **7. Disclosure (Confidentiality)**

- 7.1. Any information obtained in relation to violence and abuse must be treated in the utmost confidence. Information should only be disclosed in very limited circumstances – this would include:
- Where individuals, service providers, service users, or colleagues could be at risk of significant harm the Data Protection Act 1998 enables the lawful sharing of information although it is best practice to first seek the person's permission to disclose unless it may place anyone at further risk of harm
  - Where child or adult protection may be a concern, for example if a member of staff discloses that a child or a vulnerable adult is at risk from abuse (whether it is physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect).
- 7.2. Where information needs to be disclosed, the employee must be informed that the information may be disclosed as well as provided with information about where, to whom and why the information may be disclosed. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need to know basis. Any unauthorised breaches could be subject to disciplinary action being taken for those employed by the Council and could potentially bring legal action against the local authority.
- 7.3. The consequences of breaching confidentiality could have serious effects for the person experiencing violence and abuse – statistically, the risk of serious harm and murder increase when an individual separates from their partner. It is vital, therefore, not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of abuse is exaggerated.

## **8. Where an employee is a perpetrator of abuse**

- 8.1. The Council has a duty of care to support employees dealing with domestic abuse, a key aspect of this is being proactive about managing employees who display abusive behaviours.
- 8.2. The Council may report the conduct of any employee, contractor or agency worker who is found to be a perpetrator of abuse to the Police after seeking advice from appropriate agencies. Staff members may be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedures.
- 8.3. All employees (including temporary staff, agency workers, consultants and contract workers) and anyone supplying a service must adhere to Camden's Code of Conduct. All employees should be made aware that perpetrating any form of violence and abuse is a serious matter that could lead to criminal convictions.
- 8.4. Violence and abuse outside work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) can also lead to disciplinary action against an employee. This is because such conduct undermines

the confidence the Council (as the employer) has in the employee and may also bring the Council into disrepute. There should be an investigation of the facts as far as possible, a view taken and consideration given as to whether the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant instituting the disciplinary procedures for those employed by the Council. However, the Council recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting perpetrators to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

- 8.5. Such conduct may make certain job duties inappropriate and justify dismissal or redeployment. For example, it is not appropriate for a perpetrator of domestic abuse to be providing services to vulnerable adults and/or children.
- 8.6. Disciplinary action could result in the employee being dismissed or a change of duties or a transfer may need to be considered in such circumstances. Similarly, proven harassment or intimidation of Council employees by their partner, ex- partner or family member who also works for the Council will be viewed seriously and may be considered as gross misconduct with immediate dismissal.
- 8.7. If any of these circumstances are brought to a manager's attention, advice from Human Resources (HR) should be sought in the first instance. Managers should seek HR advice for those who are not Council employees (agency workers and contractors).

## 9. Support Available

### Additional Leave

- 9.1. The Council recognises the impact domestic abuse can have on working life so it has made a commitment to grant 10 days paid leave for victims of this crime. The aim of this is to allow employees time to make practical arrangements, take a break from work commitments and facilitate leaving an abusive partner or family member. This type of leave will be agreed by managers on a discretionary basis.
- 9.2. Human Resources are here to support managers, ensure the safety of employees and hold those who breach the Employee Code of Conduct to account. If an employee is experiencing domestic abuse or is a perpetrator, we encourage managers to consider the following:
  - [Agile and Flexible Working](#) – allow employees time off to attend therapy or access support in work hours. Managers should regularly discuss and review whether agile working is a safe arrangement as this could isolate the employee.
  - [Sickness Absence Management](#) – if there is a noticeable rise in absenteeism, try to understand the underlying reason behind this before taking further action.
  - [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#) – if employees display violent or coercive behaviour towards another employee, seek HR advice and ensure safety first before dealing with the matter.
  - [Code of Conduct](#) – discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation are a breach of our Employee Code of Conduct. Any issues should be managed under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
  - [My Performance](#) – domestic abuse can affect performance. Managers should discuss any issues in regular 1-1 meetings and review workload or duties where possible.



- [Health and Safety](#) – report any violence or aggression towards employees via the Incident Reporting Form on Essentials.

### **Camden Safety Net - Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advisory (IDSVA) Service**

- 9.3. This IDSVA service provides independent, free and confidential safety support and advice to those affected by domestic and sexual violence. Services are offered to victims/survivors who live, work or study in the borough of Camden and want safety and support.
- 9.4. Independent Domestic & Sexual Advisors (IDSVA's) are specially trained workers who offer intensive, immediate short to medium term support. They listen and discuss with you how they can help. They will risk assess and safety plan and make appropriate referrals to longer term support and counselling with your consent.
- 9.5. IDSVA contact details:
- Phone: 020 7974 2526 or 07814 671 427
  - Email: [camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk](mailto:camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk)
- 9.6. A range of advice and assistance is available on the [Home Office Website](#). You can also read our survivor stories from the Camden Safety Net [HERE](#).

### **Employee Assistance Programme**

- 9.7. Camden offers an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is a free, confidential service available to all Camden employees and their families to use via telephone, email, instant messaging and online. It is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year for you and your family to use in times of difficulty. This service provides counselling, access to impartial specialists, information and fact sheets to support you.
- 9.8. To access EAP, simply log in via the website [www.workplaceoptions.co.uk](http://www.workplaceoptions.co.uk) and input the following log in details:
- Username: Camden
  - Password: employee
- For more information, visit our [EAP Essentials page](#).

### **Able Futures**

- 9.9. Camden has also partnered with Able Futures to provide a wide range of mental health support services to staff. This free, confidential service is delivered by qualified health care professionals. For more information, visit our [Able Futures Essentials page](#).

## **10. External Support/Helplines**

### **10.1. Bright Sky**

Bright Sky is a free app providing support and information for anyone who may be in an abusive relationship, or those who are concerned about someone they know. The app provides:



- A UK-wide directory of specialist domestic abuse support services and national helplines
- A secure tool where incidents of abuse can be logged, without the content being saved on the device
- Questionnaires to assess the safety of the relationship

## 10.2. Regional/National Contacts and Helplines

Regional/National Contacts and Helplines	
Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8141
Childline	0800 11 11
Civil Legal Advice	0345 345 4345
DeafHope	07970 350366 (text) 020 8772 3241 (voice)
Forward UK (female genital mutilation specialist support)	020 8960 4000
Gallop (LGBTQ+ specialist support)	020 7704 2040
ManKind	01823 3344244
Men's Advice Line	0808 8010 327
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
National Stalking Helpline	0808 8020 300
NSPCC	0808 8005 000
Respect	0808 8024 040
Samaritans	116 123
Sexual Violence Legal Advice Line	020 7490 2562
Shelter	0808 800 4444
Victim Support	08 08 16 89 111
Women's Aid	0808 2000 247