

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 27 June 2022
Report for: Information
Report of: Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Domestic Abuse Policy

Summary

This report provides an outline of the updated Domestic Abuse Policy and our commitment to sign up to GMB's Domestic Abuse Employer Charter.

Recommendations

Note the contents of this report and approve the updated Domestic Abuse Policy so that it can be implemented.

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report doesn't directly align with one of the council's Corporate Priorities
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	None - however it links to an optional national charter which GM authorities may sign up to.
Financial	Additional paid leave for employees experiencing domestic abuse as outlined in the body of the report.
Legal Implications	Outlined in the body of this report.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Provides enhanced support for staff who are experiencing Domestic Abuse and supports our EDI agenda.
Sustainability Implications	None.
Carbon Reduction	None.
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	Being a supportive employer looking after the welfare of our employees will make us more attractive and may improve retention rates.
Risk Management Implications	This policy supports the Council in raising awareness, spotting symptoms, and tackling domestic abuse.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Creating a supportive and open work environment in which employees affected by domestic abuse feel able to have discussions and access support without fear of stigma or discrimination can

	improve mental wellbeing - which can impact on physical wellbeing as well.
Health and Safety Implications	The guidance within the policy supports managers to identify and mitigate any workplace health and safety risks specific to employees who have informed the council that they are experiencing domestic violence

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

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1. Background

1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force in April 2021. The new legislation delivers several key changes:

- It provides a clear, legal definition of Domestic Abuse.
- It includes new offences which had not been recognised in previous legislation.
- It provides local authorities with greater powers and responsibilities regarding protecting victims of Domestic Abuse.
- It extends powers granted to the police and courts to fight domestic abuse.

1.2 We have a responsibility to look after the welfare of our employees and we recognise we have a key role to play in supporting them through difficult periods in their lives, including providing comprehensive support for those experiencing domestic abuse.

1.3 With many more employees working remotely from home, there is now a growing emphasis nationally on the role of employers in raising awareness, spotting the symptoms, and tackling domestic abuse. This has been recognised and encouraged by the Government, through a BEIS led consultation and report on workplace support for victims of domestic abuse.

1.4 We have committed to signing up to the GMB Employer Charter on Work to Stop Domestic Abuse which pledges to:

- Support employees who are experiencing Domestic Abuse to access support services and information confidentially.
- Ensure that those experiencing Domestic Abuse will not be disadvantaged within the terms and conditions of their employment and will take all reasonable measures to facilitate any needs in the workplace.
- Commit to working/participating with other organisations to facilitate best support for those experiencing Domestic Abuse.

- Provide all employees with access to toolkits, information, and our policies on domestic abuse, in a format that is easily and discretely accessible within the workplace.
- Ensure that we have employees trained across our organisation to provide adequate access to support within the workplace for all employees. Staff trained should be representative of our workplace and will include line managers and Trade Union representatives.

1.5 One key aspect of signing up to the Charter, is having an appropriate policy, guidance, and support in place.

2. The Review Process

2.1 We have reviewed and updated our Domestic Abuse Policy to reflect the changes in legislation and ensure we are meeting our obligations in relation to the Charter.

2.2 The review has included benchmarking with other local authorities, checking relevant statutory/ACAS and best practice guidance, liaising with other specialists within the Council e.g. relevant Officers with the Governance and Community Strategy team, Health & Safety. The policy has been revised based on information and feedback received as part of this review process. Simple language has been used to ensure the Policy is accessible to all.

2.3 The revised Policy has been reviewed internally by Trafford's Domestic Abuse Manager and the Head of HR Operations. It has been shared with the UNISON and GMB representatives and has been approved by CLT.

3 The Policy

3.1 The revised Policy is attached as an Appendix to this report. The key changes to policy are as follows:

- The definition of Domestic Abuse has been updated in line with the statutory definition.
- The aims of the policy have been broadened and strengthened to reflect the additional support which will be available to employees.
- The 4 R's framework has been established which describes how we will support employees who have informed us that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- The framework and policy provide detailed guidance for managers on what to discuss with employees along with practical guidance on adjustments, workplace support and safety concerns.
- An individual Domestic Abuse Support Plan has been created to record any agreed actions.
- Where an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, up to 5 days paid special leave per annum may be granted to allow the employee to deal with the practical issues which can arise.*

- Mental Health First Aiders have been included as a point of contact for employees who want to talk to someone about Domestic Abuse.
- A commitment to provide training and supporting tools for all colleagues, mental health first aiders and line managers on how to support employees living with or affected by domestic abuse.

*There is no legal entitlement to provide employees with paid leave in relation to Domestic Abuse. However, trade unions and organisations who support victims of Domestic Abuse are lobbying government to give employees a statutory right to 2 weeks paid leave. Our current offer of 1 week of paid leave is in line with other support policies such as Fertility Investigation and Treatment and the Fostering Support Policy. If the national position changes we will of course review our offer.

4. Implementation Plan

- 4.1 This policy will be implemented as a live policy immediately following approval.
- 4.2 The domestic abuse page of the HR A-Z on the intranet will be updated.
- 4.3 We will promote the new policy with a six boxes announcement and inclusion in the staff and manager bulletins.
- 4.4 The Domestic Abuse e-learning module will be updated and accessible to all employees. Availability of the course will be advertised on the intranet.
- 4.5 Training for our Mental Health First Aiders was completed in December 2021 and training session for line managers will launched.

5. Benefits of the policy

- 5.1 This policy will enable the Council to provide better practical, financial, and emotional support for employees experiencing domestic abuse.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Employment Committee support the introduction of the revised and updated Domestic Abuse Policy.

Appendix 1



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DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY PRODUCED BY HUMAN RESOURCES

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1. Introduction

We take our responsibility to look after the welfare of our employees seriously and have a key role to play in supporting them through difficult periods in their lives. We understand that there may be colleagues who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who want to support friends, colleagues or family members who may be experiencing it.

Whilst domestic abuse may be seen as a personal problem and something which happens outside of work, we know it is a serious issue which can destroy lives and have far-reaching effects on individuals, families and children, and the workplace.

This policy applies to all employees and outlines our approach to supporting employees who are affected by Domestic Abuse. It is aligned to both our EPIC values and the aims of Trafford's Domestic Abuse Strategy, where we are committed to enabling our residents, their families and communities to live a healthy life, free from abuse and violence through;

- Promoting awareness of domestic abuse, including the recognition that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse regardless of their personal characteristics or socio-economic group. It is not confined to one gender or particular ethnic group.
- Promoting early identification and harm reduction.
- Promoting an understanding about the support which is available and ensuring the support is inclusive, open to all and enables the safety of victims.
- Helping to reduce and prevent a cycle of domestic abuse.

2. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Create a more understanding and supportive workplace for all staff by raising awareness of domestic abuse.
- Support all employees experiencing domestic abuse and promote their health, safety and well-being at work.
- Signpost employees to different sources of external specialist support and advice.
- Provide training, guidance and supporting tools for line managers and colleagues on how we can best support our employees who are living with or affected by domestic abuse.

3. Equality and Diversity

This policy is in line with our Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy Statement and managers are responsible for ensuring it is applied correctly within their teams.

The Council is committed to identifying domestic abuse and raising awareness that anyone can be a victim of it. We are committed to ensuring that everyone has access to support, and no-one is discriminated against, or disadvantaged in the application of this policy regardless of their race, religion or belief, age, disability, marital or civil partnership status, sex (including people going through gender reassignment), sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity status.

If any reasonable adjustments are required to access support or attend meetings, managers must ensure these are considered and put in place accordingly.

All those involved in any stage of the domestic abuse policy should be sensitive to the diverse nature of the workforce and the potential needs of our employees, for example in respect of language and observing cultural traditions.

4. The Legal definition of Domestic Abuse

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** gives a clear, statutory definition of Domestic Abuse:

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 (directly related, in laws or stepfamily) regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to;

- *Psychological – intimidation or manipulation*
- *Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting*
- *Sexual – rape or other unwanted touching/groping*
- *Financial – controlling someone’s finances to deny them money or limit their independence*
- *Emotional abuse – being made to feel guilty, emotional blackmail, gaslighting (trying to convince someone they are wrong about something, even when they aren’t)*

Other examples of abuse could include:

- Verbal – belittling, insulting or demeaning someone with words, alone or in front of others
- Online abuse – insulting or threatening someone via social media, messaging or email.
- Honour based violence
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation
- Controlling behaviours – attempting to restrict who someone sees or talks to. This is designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support (e.g. friends and family), exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence (e.g. money), resistance and escape (transport) and regulating their everyday behaviour. This can include surveillance, with the abuser monitoring their victims calls, emails, online search history etc.
- Coercive behaviour - 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.

It is important not to view domestic abuse as solely an act of physical aggression; this minimises other behaviours which can be just as, if not more, destructive to an individual. It is also important to

understand that abuse can continue or escalate, even when a relationship has ended and leaving the abuser doesn't always stop the abuse.

We recognise that everyone spends a significant amount of time at work, but coming to work and being in the workplace can have more important implications for employees affected by domestic abuse;

- The workplace can be a safe space for people experiencing domestic abuse, providing them with support from colleagues and time away from home and their abuser.
- It can give people a sense of independence, both individually and financially.
- For others, the workplace might actually pose a risk; if they have left an abusive partner and it is the only place they can be easily located, or they may work in close proximity to their abuser, or the abuser may try and maintain contact with them during the working day (e.g. regular phone calls or texts, they meet for lunch or share lifts). Research shows that 75% of those enduring domestic abuse are targeted at work.

With many colleagues now working from home on a regular basis, it may be more difficult to spot if someone is experiencing domestic abuse. The opportunities for an employee to tell someone about abuse might also be reduced and individuals might not feel comfortable discussing concerns over the phone or on teams from home.

Therefore, it is even more important that we look out for each other and remain vigilant for warning signs that someone might be experiencing difficulties at home. Further information can be found in the **Tackling Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Colleagues and Managers (Appendix 1)**.

Domestic abuse is a crime that can lead to a criminal conviction under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. As a responsible employer and local authority, we have a duty of care to take action to report domestic abuse and support our employees. Therefore, employees should be aware that any conduct inside or outside work, which perpetrates domestic abuse may result in disciplinary action being taken and/or information being passed to the local MARAC team (a Multi-agency risk assessment conference), with representatives from local safeguarding teams and the Police.

5. Our Commitment and our Framework – the 4 R's

We care about the serious impact of domestic abuse on our employees and their families and we will not tolerate or condone domestic abuse in any form.

We will provide support to victims of Domestic Abuse constructively, compassionately and sympathetically. We want to create a safe, supportive and open work environment in which employees affected by domestic abuse, currently or historically, will feel able to have discussions and access support, without fear of stigma or discrimination.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can speak in confidence to your Line Manager, a member of the HR Team or one of our [Mental Health First Aiders](#). They can provide initial support, signpost you

to resources and help you with any disclosure conversations you would like to have with anyone else. You might also want to confide in a close colleague or your trade union representative.

There are many different ways in which we will provide support to our employees and these are described in the framework below: **The 4 R's = Recognise, Respond, Refer, Record.**

We understand that every situation will be different and we will take a person-centred approach to identify exactly what support each individual needs on a case by case basis.

Recognise	Raise awareness of domestic abuse and create an understanding that it is a workplace issue and everyone can play a part in tackling it.
<p>We will....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the policy and provide guidance and training to all colleagues, including mental health first aiders and line managers (HR). • Encourage everyone to be aware of the signs of domestic abuse and the impact of it on those experiencing it. • Encourage line managers to recognise employees who may be experiencing difficulties as a result of domestic abuse and provide initial help and support, in a private, sensitive way. • Provide opportunities for employees to make a disclosure about domestic abuse (regular 1-2-1 check in conversations with manager, mental health first aiders, or meet with member of the HR team). • Challenge sexist and/or misogynistic language and behaviours in the workplace. We expect all our employees, regardless of their gender, to be treated with respect and dignity at work and we recognise the link between this language and behaviours with some types of domestic abuse. This also aligns with the GM gender based violence strategy. • Ensure the policy, supporting documents and information on support available are promoted to all colleagues via the intranet and other appropriate means. • Ensure these are kept in a central online location which is easily accessible to all employees 	
Respond	Implement policies and processes that enable a supportive workplace which will respond appropriately to disclosure.
<p>We will....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and opportunities for training to managers on how to open up conversations 	

about domestic abuse and support team members who are experiencing abuse. (HR).

- Alert employees to the support which is available.
- Provide a framework for managers to discuss domestic abuse with a team member and develop a support plan with them.
- Allow anyone who has disclosed to their manager that they are experiencing domestic abuse, the right to apply for up to 5 days paid special leave. (see below).
- Provide continued support through regular check in conversations between the individual and their manager.
- Agree a form of wording (or codeword) with an employee who has made a disclosure, in case they need to call to report sickness absence related to domestic abuse. This will ensure any problems with attendance relating to domestic abuse become apparent at an early stage (line manager).
- Follow our GDPR guidelines and ensure employee's personal data (e.g home address, phone number, exact whereabouts at work) is protected and no information is given out about an employee to anyone contacting the department (over the phone, email or in person).
- Facilitate changes to salary payment methods if required by employees experiencing financial difficulties as a result of domestic abuse (HR).
- Allow employees to use their work equipment (where applicable) for personal use in order to seek advice and access support around domestic abuse, at any time of day or night (line manager).
- Consider making workplace adjustments to support the employee (line manager). See Individual Support Plan.

Refer **Provide access to internal confidential support and signpost appropriately to external organisations who can help employees that disclose abuse.**

We will.....

- Signpost employees to a variety of external sources of support (see Guidelines for colleagues and managers), including [Trafford Domestic Abuse Services \(TDAS\)](#) who can provide 1-2-1 support.
- Provide referrals to **Occupational Health** to offer advice and guidance on medical issues.
- Provide access to a personal support service and/or a **Counselling Service** via our Employee Assistance Programme,
- Provide access to training for line managers and mental health first aiders in how to signpost

employees to sources of support.

- Take appropriate action to ensure any safeguarding concerns are reported to the relevant Safeguarding Teams.
- Help facilitate any other referrals if the employee requires support.

Record **If an employee discloses domestic abuse, it's important to record the details of what is said as accurately as possible. Should the abuse become subject to criminal proceedings, this is evidence which should be given to the police.**

We will.....

- Provide access to training for line managers on how to record a disclosure by an employee, who to inform and how to retain the information in line with GDPR.
- Record details of all incidents of violence, threatening behaviour or breaches of security towards any employee in the workplace, by a perpetrator. This should be clear, accurate and include dates, times, locations, and any witnesses. Any breaches of orders, for example, non-molestation orders should also be noted.
- Document any decision to disclose safeguarding concerns to the appropriate teams, including whether this is with/without consent (if a colleague is at serious risk of injury or death or there are safeguarding concerns for others).
- Ensure any records which are held by our Social Care Teams on Trafford employees are restricted so information is only shared to a minimum number of people, on a need to know basis, by those actively involved in supporting their case.

6. Individual DA Support Plan

If an employee discloses that they are experiencing Domestic Abuse, we need to ensure we provide them with relevant support as soon as possible. The disclosure will allow a manager to explore and signpost appropriate support and guidance.

The Individual DA Support Plan provides a framework for any discussion between an employee and their line manager about Domestic Abuse. Using this framework can help to identify areas where additional support may be required and highlights any adjustments which can be made for the employee at work. It will help the manager to assess the risks and consider whether advice should be sought from other professionals (see Section 8. Confidentiality and Consent). Any agreed actions

should be recorded on the plan and regularly monitored by both the employee and the line manager to ensure they are implemented.

Individual circumstances can change in a short space of time, so the plan should be regularly reviewed to ensure it is effective and up to date.

A link to the Individual DA Support Plan can be found [here](#).

7. Paid Special Leave

Any employee who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse and needs to take time off work is entitled to request up to 5 days paid special leave per annum.

We recognise that there are many practical issues around dealing with domestic abuse and paid leave can be helpful in facilitating time off for employees to deal with these without loss of pay or having to use annual leave/flexi leave. For example;

- Time off for appointments
- Time off to attend court
- Time off to move house or look for alternative accommodation
- Time off for dependants (if not already covered by the Special Leave – Dependants, Emergencies and Bereavement Policy)
- Time off to attend specialist support programmes which run during the working day

This should be recorded on iTrent (and on the flexi time system where applicable) as Authorised Paid Leave to maintain confidentiality.

If any additional leave is required, this will be considered on a case by case basis.

If an employee is sick as a result of domestic abuse, then this should be recorded as sickness absence in the usual way under the Attendance Management process. The reason for absence would be taken into consideration as part of any formal absence management process and relevant support and/or adjustments considered as part of that process.

8. Confidentiality and Consent

It is essential that managers and colleagues keep any information given to them by an employee concerning domestic abuse confidential, as far as possible, and always protect the individual's personal data in line with GDPR.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. We recognise a manager receiving a disclosure has an important responsibility to ensure steps are taken to support the employee, but it is not always appropriate for them to do this in isolation. A manager may need to discuss the disclosure with other professional colleagues; a member of the HR team, Safeguarding Teams, Health and Safety, a Head of Service or Director or to make a referral to TDAS for further specialist advice and support.

These circumstances occur when there are concerns about 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. In this event the manager should always seek further advice from the appropriate Safeguarding Teams, (or Health and Safety if there is a concern about the safety of colleagues) and inform the employee that they are taking this step. If an employee is not a resident of Trafford, a referral should be made to the Safeguarding Team in the local authority where they live.

Where a perpetrator may be placing their partner or family member(s) in genuine danger this may be reported to the Police. This will be subject to prior discussion with the employee wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so.

In certain circumstances it may be advisable to release some information to other people in the workplace on a need-to-know basis. For example, where a perpetrator tries to contact the employee at work, it may be helpful for team members and the security team to be aware of the situation and briefed on how to respond. The employee should agree to this approach and give consent regarding which details can be shared amongst the team. The team will also need to agree to observing confidentiality on behalf of their colleague. This should be agreed with the employee, recorded on the Individual DA Support Plan and implemented to ensure safety and reassurance.

9. If an alleged perpetrator is a Trafford employee

Domestic abuse can lead to a criminal conviction under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. For clarity, any report of an employee perpetrating domestic abuse (including conduct which raises safeguarding concerns for another adult or child), may result in this information being passed to our Safeguarding Teams and/or the Police.

Although we have a zero-tolerance policy on domestic abuse, we have a duty of care to all employees and recognise the need to offer appropriate support to employees who disclose that they themselves are perpetrators of domestic abuse, but who genuinely want to change their behaviour. Perpetrators/alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse can access general Counselling support via our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Further details of specialist organisations which offer support to perpetrators can be found in [Tackling Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Colleagues and Managers](#)

If we become aware that an employee is, or may be, perpetrating domestic abuse, the situation will be approached sensitively and fairly and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Perpetrating domestic abuse can be a serious breach of professional conduct and careful consideration will be given to all the available options before taking any action. Factors to consider include; the nature of the alleged

conduct, is it linked to work in any way, where the employee works, their level of contact with a vulnerable group. HR advice should be sought in **all cases**.

We may instigate our Disciplinary Procedure to investigate the facts of the situation and any implications for the individual's employment. For example, has there been a breach in trust and confidence, or our code of conduct? Has another employee been put at risk or has our equipment been used to inflict abuse, such as a mobile phone or laptop? Can the individual remain in their current role if there are safeguarding concerns?

If the investigation determines there is a case to answer, then disciplinary action may be taken under the disciplinary policy, up to and including dismissal for Gross Misconduct.

10. Review

This policy will be periodically reviewed in line with procedures, in order that it remains appropriate to the Council's operation, follows best practice and meets legal requirements.

Please contact the HR advice line on 0161 912 6565 (option 2) in the first instance if you require any further advice or have any questions about this policy.

Tackling Domestic Abuse - Guidelines for colleagues and managers

These guidelines have been developed to support our Domestic Abuse Policy; to help everyone recognise the signs of domestic abuse and refer people to sources of support.

We all want to support our colleagues, but the signs of domestic abuse aren't always easy to spot.

Sometimes we suspect someone might be experiencing domestic abuse, but don't know how to broach the subject for fear of upsetting someone or getting it wrong.

Managers in particular need to be aware of the signs and be prepared to take action to support your team member if required.

It's important to remember that we are not counsellors or professional support staff, but everyone should have an awareness of domestic abuse and be able to provide immediate safety support and signpost a colleague to specialist help if required. The following advice is regarded as best practice and has been suggested by a number of different charities and agencies, many of which are referenced in the support section of these guidelines.

Some facts about Domestic Abuse

Based on National data

- There are 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse each year in the UK; two thirds of whom are female and one third male.
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- The most common type of domestic abuse occurs in couple relationships, but it also includes abuse between family members, for example adolescent to parent violence and abuse (AVPV).
- 2 in 10 offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related, although in general cases are under-reported and victims of abuse may not report the problem until a number of incidents have occurred.
- On average victims at high risk of harm will live with domestic abuse for 2-3 years before seeking help.
- On average a victim will try to leave the abuser up to 8 times before they are successful.

Trafford Specific Data:

- Using estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) up to the end of March 2018, it is estimated around 5,316 women (7.9%) and 2,749 men (4.2%) in Trafford have experienced DA in the last year.

- Nationally, 28.9% of women and 13.2% of men have experienced DA since the age of 16, which in Trafford could amount to 19,448 women and 8,638 men.
- Based on findings from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2021, of those that experience domestic abuse every year in Trafford we can estimate that 6,720 (68%) are female victims and approximately 3,520 (32%) male victims.

Warning signs of Domestic Abuse

It is not always easy to tell if an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, but there are some changes you might notice in an individual's actions or behaviour, which could be a warning sign. These include examples which apply to people working from home, who may easily feel isolated;

Work Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in working patterns e.g. frequent absence, lateness, or needing to leave early. • Reduced quality and quantity of work, missing deadlines or a drop in usual performance standards • Change in communications e.g. large number of personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls. Difficulty to get hold of when working from home or presence of partner in the room. • Spending excessive hours in the office • Avoiding annual leave/time off • Obsessing about leaving work on time • Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner
Changes in Behaviour or Demeanour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct out of character with previous behaviour • Changes in behaviour e.g. very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted or depressed, hyper vigilant or sensitive. • Withdrawing from colleagues or sources of support e.g. what's app groups, social events • Secretive about home life or reluctance to turn camera on for meetings • Anxiousness about partner coming into the room during a call • Worried about leaving children at home • Anxiety about holidays, birthdays, Christmas or other celebrations

Physical Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations • Change in the amount of makeup used • Change in the manner of dress e.g. jumpers in hot weather • Substance use/misuse • Fatigue/sleep disorders • Evidence of self-harm • Change in food habits
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace or on social media • Partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule • Isolation from family/friends/colleagues • Concern about reports that children are struggling at school • Requests for time off for lots of different appointments

Discussing the issues – ideas for starting a conversation with an employee where abuse is suspected

Managers should understand it can be difficult for employees to make a disclosure of domestic abuse and their support is crucial. If a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a private conversation, whether in person or remotely if the employee regularly works from home, to discuss their wellbeing and identify and implement appropriate support. If contacting their team member remotely, managers should ensure that the employee is alone and cannot be overheard.

The aim of starting a conversation is to be supportive to employees rather than to encourage disclosure. Many people dealing with domestic abuse will never feel comfortable sharing their experience with their employer as they may not even be ready to admit it to themselves. Victims can minimise and deny the abuse. They can spend a lot of time hiding it from family and friends and may not identify as a victim.

Begin by asking indirect questions, to establish an empathetic relationship with the employee. For example:

- How are you doing at the moment?

- Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted/ upset at the moment are you ok?
- If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you
- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready
- Is there any extra support you need at the moment?

It is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential. It is also important to work on the basis of believing the employee so that they feel supported. The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available

Do	Don't
<p>Treat each person as an individual everyone's experience will be different.</p> <p>Be supportive, sensitive, non-judgemental practical and discrete.</p> <p>Make the individual's safety a priority</p> <p>Allocate private time and space to listen to the employee's difficulties and understand the detail of the problem.</p>	<p>Seek proof of any abuse</p> <p>Contact the alleged perpetrator</p> <p>Force your opinion on the employee</p> <p>Adopt the role of being a support worker yourself</p>

Ensure inclusivity

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse. Fostering an inclusive response to domestic abuse is vital for employees to have confidence that they can come forward and ask for help, and for the right support to be available when they do.

Managers should acknowledge that victims from minority communities experience unique experiences and barriers when experiencing domestic abuse. A manager's response should consider these differences and offer a victim-led approach when dealing with a disclosure.

Be aware that;

- People with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled people. Overall we can estimate there are around 45,530 individuals with a disability in Trafford. Of those individuals around 5,260 are likely to experience domestic abuse every year.
- The total non-white population in Trafford is 32,744 which is around 14% of the total population. Using this figure alongside the estimated prevalence of domestic abuse we can estimate that around 1,010 victims of domestic abuse in Trafford will be from an ethnic minority community.
- Honour based abuse does not only affect ethnic minority women but also gay, bisexual and trans men. When abuse is disclosed, it often means leaving more than just their perpetrator
- There is also a large proportion of male victims of forced marriage.
- LGBT+ people might not be open about their sexuality or gender identity at work, meaning to disclose abuse may involve also coming out. We estimate in Trafford that there will be around 1,200 victims of domestic abuse within the LGB+ community every year.
- Evidence suggests Transgender people may be at higher risk of domestic abuse but have fewer tailored services available to them
- Men find it more difficult to disclose abuse and often find more barriers to accessing support. Half of male victims (49%) fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse and are two and a half times less likely to tell anyone than female victims (19%).
- Make no assumptions about elderly employees - abuse does not discriminate. Based on the age of the population in Trafford we estimate around 1,760 individuals over the age of 60 will experience domestic abuse every year.

Receiving a disclosure

Managers should be aware that it is unlikely a team member will report domestic abuse directly to them *initially*. Many people will choose to seek out advice themselves from family and friends, external organisations or websites first of all.

However, if a situation escalates, then people may start to reach out to someone they know at work to disclose (tell someone or explain) that they are experiencing domestic abuse. This could be their line manager but it could also be a close colleague or friend, their union rep, a member of the HR team, a mental health first aider or someone from Occupational Health or our EAP service.

Where possible an employee should be encouraged to discuss it with their line manager. They are often best placed to provide the employee with support including any adjustments or security measures which might be needed at work.

Role of the line manager

1. When a problem is identified, the role of the manager is to provide initial support to the employee and ensure their safety.

2. Even if managers disagree with the decisions being made by an employee regarding their relationship, it is important to understand that there are many reasons why victims remain within the abusive relationship, and there are a number of barriers faced by a victim when leaving a relationship and fleeing the abuse. They may make a number of attempts to leave their situation, before they are finally able to do so and even then the abuse can continue after they have left.
3. Managers also need to be aware that the abused staff member is most at risk of life threatening or fatal abuse when they are attempting to leave or have recently left an abusive or violent partner. This is why it is so important to believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse. Never ask for proof or dismiss reports or use judgemental language - such as 'why don't you just leave? Or, why haven't you told anyone before?'
4. Allow them time and somewhere quiet/private to speak with you and be prepared that this will be an upsetting conversation. Reassure the employee that Trafford understands how domestic abuse may affect their physical and mental wellbeing and work performance> Explain the support that can be offered.
5. If talking on the phone, agree a code sentence in advance which indicates that the employee is no longer safe to speak about the matter, possibly because the perpetrator has entered the room.
6. The manager should explain the **4 R's Framework as detailed in the Domestic Abuse policy; Recognise, Respond, Refer, Record** and explore what practical support and reassurance can be offered both outside and inside the workplace, including any workplace adjustments. For example:
 - Support the employee with accessing a different suitable car parking space, (well lit, not isolated) possibly on another site close by that provides good access to work.
 - Provide a different exit from the building
 - Consider moving the member of staff to another office, if the member of staff consents to this
 - Provide a trusted line manager with a photo of the alleged perp, so that they know what they look like if they attend the building
 - Agree an escape route
 - Agree on a reason for why the person might have to leave work/a meeting immediately, so that the manager and member of staff know what to say if they get asked
 - Agree a safe word/ code sentence to be used when speaking on the phone/in a meeting
 - If the employee would rather work in a quiet space in the office, find a suitable location where they can still access support from colleagues as required.
7. The manager should complete an Individual DA Support Plan with their team member and ensure any action points are implemented. The plan should be reviewed and updated on a

regular basis. We recognise a manager receiving a disclosure has an important responsibility to ensure appropriate steps are taken to support the employee, but it is not always appropriate for them to do this in isolation. We also have a corporate responsibility to ensure the safety of the employee, and to act on concerns about children or vulnerable adults and members of the public, including other colleagues. The manager may therefore need to consult with other professionals within the Council in order to ensure the relevant support is provided (see Section 8. of the Domestic Abuse Policy re: Confidentiality and Consent). Completing the Individual Support Plan will help the manager to assess any risks and decide if other professionals need to be involved in providing support.

8. The manager should also signpost the employee to organisations specialising in domestic abuse who can offer specialist support, advice and advocacy (see section on the support available).
9. Take steps to address any safety implications for the workplace and the team if applicable. Possible questions to consider when assessing risk:
 - Does the alleged abuser know where the employee works?
 - Has the alleged abuser tried to contact work or posted anything on social media about the employee which is linked to work?
 - 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 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?
 - What does safety look like to you? Do you feel safe?
10. The manager should ensure they continue to “check in” with their team member on a regular basis. If they are working from home, be mindful that they could be feeling isolated and they may benefit from more face-to-face contact if this can be facilitated.
11. Remember that special dates and celebrations e.g. birthdays, wedding anniversary, Christmas, can sometimes act as a trigger for further abuse, even from an ex-partner.
12. Also be conscious that anyone who might have been the victim of abuse historically, may still be experiencing controlling abuse with an ex-partner many years later. For example, financial control, restricting access to children etc.

Further internal support/guidance/training

- Further information can be found in the Domestic Abuse intranet page.
- Our mental health first aiders can offer initial support and help signpost employees to sources of specialist support.
- Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can provide access to specialist guidance.
- All colleagues have access to the Domestic Abuse e-learning module in the Learning and Development portal
- Managers can attend one of EPIC Manager bitesize sessions on domestic abuse insert link to training calendar.

External Sources of Support

**If the employee needs help urgently or they are in serious danger they should
always contact the police on 999.**

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law) gives members of the public a formal mechanism to make enquiries about an individual who they are in a relationship with or who is in a relationship with someone they know where there is concern that the individual may be violent towards their partner. Applications can be made at police stations, by phoning 101 (the non-emergency number for the police), or by speaking to a member of the police on the street.

Ask for ANI scheme

This is a scheme backed by the government which enables victims of domestic abuse to access much needed support in one of thousands of pharmacies across the UK. If an individual approaches a member of staff and literally asks for “ANI”, a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space where they can understand if the victim needs to speak to the police or would like help to access support services such as a national or local domestic abuse helplines

24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

A service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. It is run in partnership between Women’s Aid and Refuge. Callers may first of all hear an answerphone message before speaking to a person.

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Trafford Domestic Abuse Services (TDAS)

TDAS staff are available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. To speak to one of our dedicated Domestic Abuse Advisors you can call on 0161 872 7368

Trafford Rape Crisis: General Helpline: 0800 783 4608 BAME helpline: 0800 434 6484

www.traffordrapecrisis.com

The Counselling & Family Centre, Altrincham: 0161 941 7754

www.thecfc.org.uk

Independent Choices: 0161 636 7525

www.domesticabusehelpline.co.uk

End the Fear – Greater Manchester against domestic abuse

Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Helpline **0800 254 0909** or 0161 636 7525 (Open Mon-Fr 10am to 4pm excl. bank holidays).

<http://www.endthefear.co.uk>

Greater Manchester Police (Public Protection Investigation Unit): 0161 856 7574

Trafford Child Protection Line: 0161 912 5125

Respect Phonenumber 0808 802 4040

A confidential helpline for people who are abusive and/or violent towards their current or ex-partner. Offers information and advice to support perpetrators to stop their violence and change their abusive behaviours. The main focus is to increase the safety of those experiencing domestic violence.

<http://www.respectphonenumber.org.uk/>

Men's Advice Line (support for men who experience domestic violence and abuse): 0808 801 0327

A confidential helpline for all men experiencing domestic violence by a current or ex-partner. Caters for all men: whether in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Offers emotional support, practical advice and information on a wide range of services for further help and support.

www.mensadvice.org.uk

Hestia – Bright Sky app

Bright Sky is a safe, easy to use app and [website](#) that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic abuse. It is for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.

Download the app [here](#).

Broken Rainbow 0300 999 5428

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.

help@brokenrainbow.org.uk <http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/>

Karma Nirvana 0800 599 9247

Helpline: supports victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour based abuse

<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Man Kind Initiative

The Man Kind Initiative is a national charity that provides help and support for male victims of domestic abuse.

<https://www.mankind.org.uk/>

Muslim Women's Helpline 020 8904 8193 or 020 8908 6715

The Muslim Women's Helpline aims to provide any Muslim girl or woman in a crisis with a free, confidential listening service and referral to Islamic consultants, plus practical help and information where required.

[MWN Helpline UK](#)

Southall Black Sisters

Southall Black Sisters provide advice and information on domestic abuse, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African and African-Caribbean women.

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Saheli Asian Womens Project 0161 945 4187

www.saheli.org.uk

Galop (support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence and abuse): 0800 999 5428

www.galop.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit (help for people afraid of being forced into marriage): 0207 008 0151

NESTAC is a registered charity, established to support Africans and immigrants, particularly those living in the North West of England. 01706 868993

www.nestac.org.uk

Collaborative Women [Community Group](#) | [Collaborative Women](#) | [Stretford](#)

[Survivors Manchester - Break the silence 0808 800 5005](#)

LGBT Foundation Domestic Abuse 0345 3 30 30 30

LGBT specialist support and housing provision for low – medium and high risk victims of DA

[LGBT Foundation - Domestic Abuse](#)

[Paladin Stalking and Harassment](#)

Paladin is the National Stalking Advocacy Service for high risk victims of stalking covering England and Wales.

Appendix 2 Individual DA Support Plan – To be completed by line manager

This should be used to assist with any conversations between you and a member of your team if they have disclosed they are experiencing domestic abuse. Record any relevant actions to ensure points are implemented as agreed.

Ensure you have read the Domestic Abuse Policy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Managers and Colleagues before meeting with your team member.

- The aim of the discussion is to provide initial emotional and wellbeing support to the employee with particular focus on their own personal safety and physical and mental wellbeing.
- It will also help identify any immediate areas of practical support which can be provided at work, including any reasonable adjustments, to help the employee deal with the effects of domestic abuse and minimise any impact on them at work.
- It will prompt you to signpost them to relevant sources of external specialist support.
- This is not intended to be a prescriptive checklist of actions. Every situation will be different and the focus should be on listening to the employee, facilitating further discussion and exploring what support can be arranged.
- Ensure you explain to your team member that you will be taking notes of the discussion, but the information will be stored confidentially. Be mindful however that depending on the circumstances it may not be appropriate for you to offer your support in isolation. You may need to discuss the disclosure with other professional colleagues; a member of the HR team, Safeguarding Teams, Health and Safety, a Head of Service or Director or to make a referral to TDAS for further specialist advice and support.
- Ensure that you are in a private space, ideally face to face, and have allowed plenty of time for the discussion.
- If you are having the conversation remotely please ensure no-one else can hear the conversation and the employee feels they are in a “safe space” where the abuser is not nearby.
- Bear in mind the employee might find this conversation quite challenging; they may be upset or might not be able to answer some of these questions. They may not know how they want to be supported, especially if its one of the first conversations they have had about their situation. Add in regular wellbeing conversations and work together so that when things get clearer for the employee you can tailor the support around their needs at that time.
- Keep going back to the plan and if they have a change in line manager, the employee can choose to share it with their new manager so they don't have to keep repeating their story.

Name of employee	
Name of line manager	
Service Area	
Date of discussion	

<p>Starting the conversation</p> <p><i>Allow the employee time to lead the conversation and ensure you LISTEN. Try not to interrupt if they are talking.</i></p> <p><i>If they are struggling, try asking a couple of open questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there anything you would like to discuss?</i> • <i>How are you feeling at the moment?</i> • <i>How are things at home?</i> • <i>I really want to help you. Is there anything I can do?</i> <p>Provide reassurance.....</p> <p><i>If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm</i></p>	<p>Include an outline of what they say. Note any serious concerns and actions:</p>
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<p><i>always here to support you.</i></p> <p><i>You can tell me as much or as little as you like, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready</i></p> <p><i>Try to explore the following:</i></p> <p><i>Has anything happened to prompt the discussion today?</i></p> <p><i>Who has done this?</i></p> <p><i>Has this happened before? Over what period of time? Has it got worse?</i></p> <p><i>Do they know we have a DA policy and guidelines in place to help support them?</i></p>	
<p>Is there anything they need immediately?</p> <p><i>Try to explore the following:</i></p> <p><i>Do they need any medical assistance?</i></p> <p><i>Do they have any physical injuries?</i></p> <p><i>How is their mental wellbeing?</i></p>	<p>Note any serious concerns including safeguarding and record actions:</p>

<p><i>Do they feel safe?</i></p> <p><i>Do they feel frightened about anything right now?</i></p> <p><i>Are you worried about work?</i></p>	
<p>What are their living arrangements?</p> <p><i>Try to explore the following:</i></p> <p><i>Where do they live – is this permanent or temporary?</i></p> <p><i>Do they live with the perpetrator?</i></p> <p><i>Are any children at home – if so how old are they?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any other adults (vulnerable or not) living in the house?</i></p> <p><i>Are you worried about money?</i></p> <p><i>Is there anything coming up that you are worried about e.g Christmas, Parents evening, other family events?</i></p>	<p>Note any serious concerns including safeguarding and record actions:</p>
<p>What support do they have?</p>	<p>Note any concerns and actions:</p>

<p><i>Try to explore the following:</i></p> <p><i>Have they confided in any friends/family/colleagues?</i></p> <p><i>Have they contacted anyone else e.g GP, helpline, specialist support?</i></p> <p><i>Have they had any emotional or practical help?</i></p> <p><i>Signpost to our EAP service and the external contacts listed on the guidance</i></p> <p><i>Do they know about the additional 5 days paid leave they are entitled to?</i></p> <p><i>What support do they need? (think about short term and long term)</i></p> <p><i>What is the best way to contact them safely?</i></p> <p><i>Do they know they can use work equipment to access support whenever they need it?</i></p>	
<p>How do they feel about work?</p> <p>Where do they work? (home/office/school/other council building/combination of)</p>	<p>Note any concerns about current working arrangements and actions:</p>

Try to explore the following:

How are they coping with work? (They may be concerned about their performance or taking time off so provide reassurance and support)

Do they have any concerns about working from home or coming into the office?

Do they think the perpetrator might try and contact them at their workplace?

Is the employee frightened of anything specific that might take place at work or to and from work?

Have they shared any information with any of their colleagues? How do they feel about that?

What would they find helpful? Think about whether any adjustments can be put in place to support the employee, for example:

- Agreed response to the perpetrator if they telephone or try to visit the workplace (this could include notifying reception/security if they may attend)*
- Change in workplace location (away from an external window or in a different office)*
- Change in entry/exit point*

- *Change in travel arrangements (help with transport to work)*
- *Consider a change in working hours (vary start and finish times)*
- *Being accompanied when arriving or leaving the buildings or on visits outside the office (buddy up with a colleague who does the same job)*
- *Establish reporting in arrangements to ensure whereabouts are known throughout the day, including regular contact if working from home.*

Consider agreeing a code word/sentence which can be used when talking on the phone, which indicates that the employee is no longer safe to speak about the matter, possibly because the perpetrator has entered the room.

How do they feel about confidentiality?

Try to explore the following:

Do they consent to allowing you to discuss these points with other professionals if necessary e.g. HR, Safeguarding Teams.

Do they want to share anything with members of their immediate team, discreetly and in confidence?

<p><i>Do they consent to sharing this information with a new line manager if there are any changes in the team?</i></p>	
<p>What would they like to happen next?</p> <p><i>Try to explore the following:</i></p> <p><i>Is there anything else we can do to support them?</i></p> <p><i>Is there anyone else they would like to inform and do they need any help to facilitate this discussion e.g. Police, Safeguarding Teams, Trafford Domestic Abuse Service (TDAS)</i></p> <p><i>Highlight the ongoing support available from our Mental Health First Aiders and our EAP Service</i></p> <p><i>Explain that we can refer them to TDAS who will be able to offer specialist advice and support and complete an in depth assessment with them to ensure they get appropriate external support.</i></p>	

Action Points

Area	Detail	Lead for the action	By
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			when?
Immediate needs or Safeguarding concerns			
Living arrangements			
Support required			
Workplace adjustments/risks			
Confidentiality			
Next steps			
Other			

Plan to be reviewed on :
Signed:
Date: