
Domestic Abuse Statement



Council of the
ISLES OF SCILLY

June 2016

REVISIONS TO SOURCE DOCUMENT

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VERSION HISTORY

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DOCUMENT RETENTION

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INTRODUCTION

WHY DOMESTIC ABUSE IS A WORKPLACE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Council of the Isles of Scilly:
 - 1.1.1 Recognises that domestic abuse is a widespread problem and will not tolerate any form of violence or abuse either within the workplace or outside.
 - 1.1.2 Appreciates that its employees will be amongst those impacted by domestic abuse and that it has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment.
 - 1.1.3 Is committed to responding with sensitivity to employees who need help and support, to taking action against perpetrators of domestic abuse and to ensuring a safe environment for all employees.
 - 1.1.4 Is aware of the wide-reaching effects of domestic abuse and that for some victims, the workplace is the only place offering respite from abuse and potential routes to safety.
- 1.2 Individuals experiencing domestic abuse may be subject to disciplinary action and lose their jobs because changes in usual behaviour, decreased productivity, poor timekeeping or excessive absenteeism are misinterpreted.
- 1.3 Colleagues can also be affected as they may be questioned by the perpetrator about the victim's whereabouts, have to cover for the victim if they're absent from work or fear for their own safety.
- 1.4 The Council of the Isles of Scilly sees having an effective workplace domestic abuse statement as a positive way of retaining skilled and experienced employees. It also demonstrates intolerance to abuse within the workplace and outside it.

DEFINITION

- 1.5 The Home Office currently defines domestic abuse as:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, sexual, emotional, physical, financial'
- 1.6 This definition includes honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 1.7 Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly or indirectly related, in-laws or step-family.

- 1.8 Domestic abuse is a generic term to describe a range of behaviour used by one person to control and dominate another with whom they have had, wanted to have or are in, a close intimate, family or other type of relationship.
- 1.9 It can be actual violence, or the threat of violence or sexual, psychological or emotional abuse. Its effects range from bruising to permanent injury and can result in death.
- 1.10 It can be emotional, mental and verbal abuse, threats, belittlement, isolation or control of finance and activity. Less visible effects include diminishing self-esteem, fear, guilt, insomnia, depression, agoraphobia and difficulty trusting others.
- 1.11 Domestic abuse occurs irrespective of actual or perceived ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender and mental or physical ability. There is no typical recipient or perpetrator of domestic abuse; however research has shown that in the majority of cases, it is women who experience domestic abuse from male partners, ex-partners or family members.

PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THIS STATEMENT

- 2.1 The Council of the Isles of Scilly recognises that its employees may be impacted by domestic abuse and that as an employer it has a responsibility to provide a safe and effective working environment.
- 2.2 By developing an effective domestic abuse statement and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse for all employees, we will create a safer workplace and also send out a strong message consistent with our values that domestic abuse is unacceptable.
- 2.3 It is acknowledged that whilst it is usually women who experience domestic abuse this policy applies equally to men who require advice and support.

ORGANISATIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICE

- 3.1 Employees who have disclosed they are experiencing domestic abuse will not be judged – they will be listened to and supported safely in a way which is agreeable to them. They will be provided with every reasonable consideration both personally and professionally.
- 3.2 Employees will be supported in making positive changes and provided with a safe working environment including whilst travelling to and from work.
- 3.3 The Health & Safety of all employees will be considered while supporting an employee with domestic abuse issues whether victim or perpetrator.
- 3.4 Engaging with employee perpetrators in a positive way can help to increase safety – it does not excuse the abuse.

- 3.5 An employee who is cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence will be subject to the Council of the Isles of Scilly Disciplinary Policy. Each case will be reviewed in accordance with the procedure with attention focussing on whether their behaviour is impacting on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and if their behaviour is likely to be considered to bring the employer into disrepute.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.1 The Council of the Isles of Scilly recognises that employees who disclose themselves to be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse should be assured the information they provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be shared without seeking their permission.
- 4.2 However, in certain circumstances, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed:
- 4.2.1 The Council of the Isles of Scilly has a duty of care to ensure the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults at all times. In circumstances whereby a child, children or vulnerable adult is potentially at risk, the authority will immediately inform the relevant statutory safeguarding services.
 - 4.2.2 Confidentiality will also be breached if action is required to protect the safety of other employees if it becomes evident they are at risk of harm from the perpetrator.
 - 4.2.3 If an employee discloses a potential high risk of serious harm or loss of life to themselves or others, or risk of a serious crime being committed, immediate contact will be made with the police.
- 4.3 A person experiencing domestic abuse is likely to first raise the matter with an individual with whom they feel most comfortable. All staff must therefore use their expertise to ensure the staff member disclosing feels listened to and positively supported. Ensure that all options are discussed and that they remain in control of the situation. If you are not the line manager, encourage the employee to speak to their line manager. And also seek the advice of other relevant agencies if appropriate.
- 4.4 Managers need to develop a sensitive and non-judgemental approach. This should include:
- 4.4.1 Taking time to listen to the employee.
 - 4.4.2 Any discussion to take place in private with the parameters of confidentiality explained immediately.
 - 4.4.3 Respecting the choices and decisions made by the employee.
 - 4.4.4 Being aware of or accessing the range of support available and exploring options with the employee.

ENSURING SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

- 5.1 If it becomes known that an employee is the victim of domestic abuse a mutually agreed workplace safety plan will be agreed with the victim and implemented as soon as is reasonably practicable. The plan will be reviewed at regular intervals and/or upon disclosure of any new incident for the employee. Support for producing this plan can come from the REACH service.
- 5.2 Any employee experiencing domestic abuse will be actively supported to choose an appropriate course of action, to ensure their safety and wellbeing, and that of their children, is prioritised at all times.

HELP AND SUPPORT

LEAVE AND TIME OFF WORK

- 6.1 The Council of the Isles of Scilly will look sympathetically at requests for reasonable time off within existing arrangements for employees who disclose they are experiencing Domestic Abuse. This may include the facilitation of special (compassionate) leave or flexible working arrangements to allow employee victims time to address practical matters such as meeting with the police, an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) or solicitor, attending GP or hospital appointments, attending court, reviewing housing options, attending to financial matters.
- 6.2 Supportive measures such as a temporary change in working hours or work base may also need to be considered as part of safety planning measures and risk assessment.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

- 6.3 An employee may be subject to various financial pressures and hardship: they may have no access to funds and/or bank accounts might be monitored as a means of compounding isolation and exerting control by the perpetrator of the domestic abuse.
- 6.4 The Council of the Isles of Scilly will take all reasonable steps to assist with such matters and may be prepared to provide short-term practical support.

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND PERFORMANCE

- 6.5 Managers must have an awareness of the wide range of indicators which can highlight someone is experiencing domestic abuse. The following can all be indicators, individually or collectively, of domestic abuse:
- 6.5.1 Evidence of physical injuries i.e. cuts, bruises, bite marks.
 - 6.5.2 Change in usual appearance i.e. unkempt, wearing the same clothes for more than one day.
 - 6.5.3 Unusually heavy make-up or wearing an excessive amount of clothing on hot days.
 - 6.5.4 Rapid, unexplained weight loss.
 - 6.5.5 Fatigue, tearfulness, depression, aggression, distraction, anxiety, low self-esteem.
 - 6.5.6 Poor work performance.
 - 6.5.7 Increased absences through ill health.
 - 6.5.8 Lack of concentration.
 - 6.5.9 Poor timekeeping: arriving late with no explanation or leaving early.
 - 6.5.10 Increased hours worked for no apparent reason: arriving early or staying late.
 - 6.5.11 Increased frequency of personal telephone calls, texts, emails.
 - 6.5.12 Unexplained absenteeism.
 - 6.5.13 Negative changes in behaviour or conduct.
- 6.6 Support will be given to ensuring the employee's stress and anxiety is not exacerbated by work role and responsibilities – where possible, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure the employee is able to function within the workplace without detriment.
- 6.7 In the event of an employee requiring extended leave for any reason relating to domestic abuse, the Council of the Isles of Scilly will take appropriate and supportive steps to facilitate a positive return to work which takes into consideration the needs of the individual and the organisation. If appropriate, a phased return may be agreed.

COUNSELLING AND EXPERT SUPPORT

- 6.8 Managers and employees should not seek to counsel colleagues who are either victims of domestic abuse or perpetrators. Professional support and advice is available from a variety of organisations.

EMPLOYEE PERPETRATORS

- 7.1 Domestic abuse perpetrated by a Council of the Isles of Scilly employee will not be condoned under any circumstance nor will it be treated as a purely private matter.
- 7.2 In the event of a there being a disclosure that an employee is the alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse, that individual may be formally interviewed and made aware that domestic abuse will not be tolerated and may lead to a criminal investigation.
- 7.3 An investigation will be undertaken to determine whether any abuse has occurred in the workplace or involved the use of council resources. It may be inappropriate for the perpetrator to carry out certain duties defined by their current role: consideration will be given to redeployment and/or disciplinary action.
- 7.4 Should there be any evidence of abuse occurring during work time, or within the workplace, it will be reported immediately to the police. Disclosure of unlawful activity or serious offence will also be reported to the police.
- 7.5 In situations where a victim and their perpetrator both work for the authority, the organisation will seek advice and take appropriate action. Whilst investigation is underway, action may be taken to ensure the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact within the workplace. This may require a temporary change in duties or redeployment for one or other or both parties.

HELP AND SUPPORT

- 8.1 Professional support from within the Council of the Isles of Scilly can be accessed through colleagues in Social Care.
- 8.2 REACH (Risk Evaluation and Coordination Hub) offer a one stop shop for support in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and can be contacted on:
 - 8.2.1 Telephone 0300 777 4 777
 - 8.2.2 Mobile 07760 442581
 - 8.2.3 E-mail reach@twelvescompany.co.uk
- 8.3 For further information see <https://www.twelvescompany.co.uk/>