

# Domestic Abuse Policy September 2016

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## 1. Introduction

Rossendale Borough Council (the Council) is committed to a multi-agency approach to respond effectively to the issue of domestic abuse. **Domestic Abuse is an issue which affects all sections of society and it is therefore important that we have clear and effective responses to help minimise the impact of domestic abuse on our employees.**

## 2. Definition of Domestic Abuse

**The Home Office (2013) define domestic violence and abuse as;**

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”*

## 3. Aims of the Policy

- To demonstrate the Council’s commitment to and support for anyone employee experiencing domestic abuse
- To increase awareness of domestic abuse, what forms it can take and its likely effects on **employees**;
- To provide advice about appropriate action to take should **employee** be experiencing domestic abuse, whether they approach the Council as a service user or employee;

To be clear and consistent in that advice;

- i) to publicise support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse;
- ii) to ensure that Council employees understand the important role they can play in tackling domestic abuse;
- iii) to set out what the Council may do if an employee is found to be a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

## 4. Confidentiality

**For employees experiencing and receiving support for domestic abuse, it must remain confidential as far as is reasonably practicable within out duties as an employer. Once an employee has confided to their line manager that they are experiencing domestic abuse, the manager should reassure them that they will keep this information confidential, unless the employee gives express permission to disclose information or there are circumstances that warrant sharing information. This could include where there are child protection issues.**

**If an employee give information that suggests that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk from abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect), the manager should inform the**

employee that they will need to refer to Children's or Adult's Services in accordance with Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

## **5. Members of the public accessing Council Services experiencing domestic abuse**

The Council recognises that men, women and children experiencing domestic abuse will often access its services when in a crisis situation. It is therefore imperative that the services we offer are well co-ordinated and that the members of staff who deal with these situations are well informed and trained to respond appropriately.

We also recognise that the Council is not always the most appropriate source of support and that our role includes awareness of, and signposting individuals and families to, other relevant local agencies. **In the event of a family in crisis contacting the Council, the Council would in most cases sign post to the STAR Centre (Services Targeted Around Abuse in Rossendale) to which the Council contributes financial support.**

In general when an approach for assistance is made to the Council, we will:

- respond appropriately taking into account individual needs and circumstances, cultural diversity, disability, etc.
- provide appropriate private interview arrangements
- provide a member of staff of the same sex, if appropriate or requested
- provide an interpreter if necessary or requested
- listen to the service user in a safe, confidential environment, giving them time to explain their situation

We will not:

- expect individuals to prove their experience of domestic abuse
- contact the alleged perpetrator nor insist that legal action be taken against the alleged perpetrator
- pass on messages from perpetrator to victim or vice versa
- act as a go-between

In order to achieve the above aims we will ensure that our contractors and staff likely to come into contact with service users experiencing domestic abuse are offered the appropriate training and support.

## **6. Employees experiencing domestic abuse**

Clear and effective responses are important to help minimise the impact of domestic abuse on council employees.

The Council believes that all employees have the right to raise the issue of domestic abuse with their employer in the knowledge that the issue will be treated with sympathy and confidentiality and that an effective support system will be available to them.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse will be expected to take a responsible attitude towards ensuring their own health and safety and that of their colleagues when the abuse impacts upon the workplace.

## 7. Manager's Role

A manager may become aware or suspect that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse although the employee might not feel able to raise the issue with anyone.

Managers should be alert to signals such as frequent absence from work, poor performance or a partner frequently making contact.

In these cases offering appropriate support may mean that the employee is able to deal with her situation more effectively. The issues surrounding domestic abuse can be complex and sensitive. Advice should be sought from the People & Policy Team.

Managers **should be mindful that** a sensitive approach **is required** and ensure that employees are offered support if the issue of domestic abuse has been disclosed to them. Managers are advised:

- To ensure privacy and confidentiality as far as possible
- To ensure a non-judgemental approach, taking the employee seriously and above all, listening and believing what they tell you
- That an employee may wish to involve a third party i.e. a friend, **rather than when speaking to** their line manager
- That additional issues such as age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and disability may also face the employee and managers should be aware of this
- To support the employee in whatever they decide to do by exploring the support and options available to them. **Managers should be mindful that employees might not want to involve other agencies and their decision(s) should be respected even if the line manager disagrees with it**
- Managers must maintain a secure environment for all employees. In cases of domestic abuse the Council's risk assessment procedure should be followed. To ensure a secure environment it may be necessary to consider, with the employee concerned, the possibility of informing colleagues of any potential risk
- Colleagues should always be reminded of the confidentiality of the issue and information should only be disclosed with the express permission of the employee concerned

**Managers should work with employees to adjust their schedule or workload as necessary and offer the option of having time off (e.g. flex or leave) to resolve practicalities, for example attending solicitor meetings, making financial arrangements or arranging alternative accommodation. In emergency situations consider where such time could be granted under the Council's Special leave Policy.**

**Ensure safe communication is maintained with the employee during any absence, whilst remembering to maintain confidentiality of their whereabouts.**

**Encourage the employee to record all incidents of abuse or threatening behaviour in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, e-mails or visits to an employee by the alleged**

perpetrator. The Council have a duty to maintain a safe place of work, which necessitates the need to monitor and record all such incidents. Witnesses to these incidents should also be recorded. The records could be used if an employee wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator.

The employee may wish to obtain a restraining order that includes the workplace. If obtained, a copy should be kept at hand at all times. The employee should consider providing a copy to the police and their Manager.

Attendance at court **may** be necessary if criminal charges are brought. Leave **should** be granted in accordance with the Council's Special Leave Policy. The Manager should follow normal Council procedures for recording any absences or Special Leave.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse will be asked whether they agree to their report being recorded for monitoring purposes. All reports will remain anonymous.

## **8. The Council's Approach to Employees who are alleged or Actual Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse**

Employees should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter that can lead to criminal convictions.

## **9. Conduct at work**

Perpetrators of domestic abuse might use workplace resources such as telephone, fax or email to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partners, and may involve other colleagues who may or may not be aware of their motives in assisting them.

Such abuse requires an effective employer response because it could be damaging and potentially dangerous for those being abused, as well as possibly bringing the Council into disrepute if the abuse is allowed to continue.

Similarly, proven harassment and intimidation of Council employees by their partner or ex-partner who also works for the Council will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. This can be deemed as Gross Misconduct and lead to dismissal.

## **10. Conduct outside of work**

Conduct outside of work (whether or not it leads to police action/a criminal conviction) can also lead to disciplinary action against an employee because of its employment implications and because it undermines the confidence the Council (as an employer) has in the employee. This can be deemed as Gross Misconduct and lead to dismissal.

### **Taking Action**

Prior to commencement of any disciplinary action please seek advice from the People and Policy Team.

## 11. Information, support and training for employees

The Council recognises that all employees need to be made aware of domestic abuse issues and the impact on their work place.

To support the implementation of this policy the People and Policy Team will:

- iv) Publicise the Policy through the Team Brief;
- v) Place the full Domestic Abuse Policy on the Council's Intranet.
- vi) Arrange for relevant employees to receive specific training to ensure they have the necessary skills to support someone experiencing domestic abuse;
- vii) Assist employees experiencing domestic abuse and those supporting them e.g. managers/colleagues to be signposted to appropriate counselling services where necessary. This may include a referral, with the employee's consent, via the Council's Occupational Health Unit. In certain circumstances perpetrators of domestic abuse will also be offered access to counselling or another appropriate service.

## 12. Useful contacts

Clare Law, HR Manager  
Telephone 01706 252457 / 07866 747352  
[clarelaw@rossendalebc.gov.uk](mailto:clarelaw@rossendalebc.gov.uk)

Lancashire Social Care  
Telephone 0300 123 6720 / 0300 123 6721

The STAR (Services Targeted Around Abuse in Rossendale) Centre  
01706 830 600

Womens Aid Help Line 0808 2000 247  
Mens Help Line -0800 8233623 / 0845 0646800

Rossendale Borough Council Housing Options for advice on housing  
Telephone 01706 252555 / 07814430784  
[housingoptions@rossendalebc.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@rossendalebc.gov.uk)

Domestic Violence and Abuse  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>





