



Hyndburn Borough Council

Customer First Analysis

Domestic Abuse Policy

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## 1. Purpose

Following a request from Unison, the Council wishes to develop a Domestic Abuse policy. Domestic abuse is the misuse of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial control by one person over another who is or has been in a relationship. This includes family members.

The policy will aim to help the council demonstrate its duty of care to residents and employees and its commitment to supporting them. It is intended to signpost people to existing sources of information and support and outline the council's provisions on how to manage the effects of domestic abuse on the workforce. The aim is to raise awareness of issues and indicate how they can be approached by both managers and employees.

The council also recognises that a domestic abuse issue may not currently be identified but may be reflected in an employee's unexplained sickness absence or lack of productivity. The Lancashire Domestic Violence strategy says, "Workplaces can be a place of safety for women, thus an area for effective interventions to be developed, such as information in induction packages & helpline numbers on payslips. The focus should be on improved workplace policy, awareness and response across all, but importantly large employers. Unions may be able to help promote a workplace response."

It is planned that employees experiencing or surviving domestic abuse will be aware of the Council's commitment of support and be encouraged to seek advice and be provided with a resource list. Managers need knowledge of where to go to find information and support in order to be confident in supporting staff affected by domestic abuse.

The stakeholders are all employees, managers, HR, Trade Unions, Occupational Health, as well as residents who approach the council for information, advice and support.

Hyndburn Borough Council is part of the Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Domestic Violence Forum. We commission Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Domestic Violence Team (HARV) to deliver advice and support services for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

## 2. Evidence

According to the Lancashire strategy, it is estimated that nearly 60,000 women in Lancashire are experiencing domestic abuse in any year. This is likely to be a conservative estimate as much domestic violence is not disclosed. For half those experiencing domestic abuse, there are children aged under 16 in the household (Mirrlees-Black, 1999). With an average of 2 children per household, we can estimate that at least as many children are living with domestic abuse in any given year. The cost of sickness absences/time off work due to injuries is estimated at £73 million.

## 3. Impact

Domestic abuse can affect any individual within society. However, some specific groups are more vulnerable, especially women, based on existing national and local data. Domestic abuse cuts across characteristics such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief and class/status.

There is a risk that managers might view domestic abuse as applying to women and it needs to be recognised that victims may be men and also people in same-sex relationships.

It is important to be aware that victims of domestic abuse sometimes suffer more violence because of additional factors such as their mental health, learning disabilities or religion or belief. Forced marriage may also be a factor.

As this is to be a new policy, no monitoring has yet taken place but we will consider what systems should be in place to collect information when the policy is implemented.

## 4. Actions

We will improve the signposting information available on the Council's website to include sites such as the Safer Lancashire website, the Women's Aid campaign, Men's helpline and Lancashire Constabulary.

We will develop a Plain English policy which contains practical information and guidance for employees and on the scope of the manager's role. It will refer employees to further sources of help and expertise. It should detail what support will be available to employees, who are victims or alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The policy should be clear about information sharing and confidentiality, including where this may not be possible, such as where there are child protection issues.

Signposting should include a range of issues, including support for male victims and for those being faced with forced marriage.

The policy should be supported by training and awareness-raising activities for employees and members. These will include publicising the policy through internal communications mechanisms such as Hyndsight and News in the Loos. Consider the existing provision of information at Council reception points and whether this needs to be improved.