



## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY**

**September 2016**

**This Policy has been screened for Equality.**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence/abuse is a serious and widespread problem. It is 'threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, mental or economic) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been, intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent and can continue when the people are no longer living together. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. The most harmful abuse tends to be carried out by men against female partners but abuse can also occur by women against men and within same sex relationships. People also experience domestic violence regardless of their age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography. The abuse can begin at any time – in new relationships or after many years spent together.

Domestic violence/abuse is a crime. It is socially harmful and disruptive and can impinge on work attendance and performance and ultimately health and wellbeing.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) is a Safe Employer. Victims of domestic abuse/violence will be assisted. Throughout the Borough Safe Places have available for victims of domestic abuse/violence useful contact numbers from which they may seek professional advice or assistance. Examples of Safe Places are Antrim Civic Centre, Mossley Mill, Leisure Centres and other Council premises. A sticker is displayed prominently in these premises to show they are Safe Places.

## **Safe Town**

A Safe Town:

- Promotes zero tolerance to domestic violence or abuse
- Recognises that Domestic Violence or Abuse impacts upon many people living or working there, regardless of age, religion, disability, ethnic or cultural background.
- Aims to provide an inclusive means of providing information on a range of organisations available to help anyone affected by domestic violence/abuse.

A number of Towns within the Borough have been awarded Safe Town status, the current list is included in Appendix 1.

## **Safe Community**

The Council is committed to raising awareness of domestic violence in the community through the work of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership. In promoting Safe Community, the Council is committed to developing safer communities to connect people with local resources and support that enable them to resolve their own problems and challenges.

## **Safe Employer**

This policy demonstrates the Council's commitment as a Safe Employer, and maintaining Gold Workplace Charter Status, by providing guidance for employees and managers to address the occurrence of domestic violence and its effects on the workplace. The Council continues to work in partnership with ONUS to achieve Safe Borough status.

The Council strives to create a working environment that promotes the view that violence against people is unacceptable and that such violence will not be condoned.

Domestic violence/abuse may involve violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls or e-mails, intimidation or harassment.

Domestic violence/abuse has a damaging effect on people and can have an adverse impact on their employment – hospitalisation because of physical injuries, not being allowed out of the house, frequently taking time off work sick and mental health problems. However the cause of these effects is often not talked about because victims are frightened of further attack and/or of perceived repercussions on their ability to carry out their job.

Employees who have been subjected to domestic violence should be treated no less favourably in terms of their existing employment or career development.

Whilst it is usually women who experience domestic violence, this policy and guidance applies equally to men who require advice or help.

## **2. POLICY**

### **2.1 Confidentiality**

Whilst employees experiencing domestic violence normally have the right to complete confidentiality, in circumstances of child protection or the protection of an adult at risk of harm/abuse, the child protection and adult protection services may need to be involved. In addition, where there is serious concern regarding potential, serious harm to an individual, or where a crime has been disclosed, there may be a legal requirement to share information with appropriate statutory organisations. The Council wishes to ensure that all actions arising from disclosure of domestic violence or abuse are employee lead and will endeavour to support employees but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in cases where a crime or risk of significant harm has been disclosed. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in these situations.

### **2.2 Right to privacy**

The Council respects an employee's right to keep private the fact that they have experienced domestic violence.

### **2.3 Absence options for employees experiencing domestic violence**

The Council will make every effort to assist an employee experiencing domestic violence. If an employee needs to take leave from work due to domestic

violence, the length of the leave will be determined by the individual's situation through collaboration with the employee and their line manager.

Managers and supervisors are encouraged to provide a sympathetic response to requests for special leave (unpaid); flexible working and other revised working arrangements as a result of domestic violence/abuse, for example flexible working hours to enable the employee to seek protection, go to court, look for new housing, enter counselling, arrange child care etc.

#### **2.4 Attendance and Performance**

The Council is aware that domestic violence victims may have performance problems such as absenteeism or lower productivity. When addressing attendance, performance and safety issues the Council will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation and/or safety problems and aim to assist the employee in seeking professional help.

#### **2.5 Safety at work**

The Council undertakes to ensure the safety of its employees whilst at work. If an employee makes it known to the Council that they are experiencing domestic violence, the Council will actively provide support to minimise the risk to their safety.

#### **2.6 Visible resources for those involved in domestic violence**

The Council will post in locations of high visibility, a list of resources for employees affected by domestic violence. If possible, contact details for the agencies which can provide help will also be provided in private locations to be picked up by employees.

#### **2.7 Providing support for employees**

The Council will make support available to employees involved in domestic violence through line managers, Human Resources, Occupational Health and the confidential counselling service. A team of trusted colleagues will also be trained to support employees and signpost to professional services. The list of trusted colleagues is included at the back of this policy.

The role of the trusted colleague is to:

- Be available and approachable to employees experiencing domestic violence
- Listen, reassure and support individuals
- Keep information confidential (subject to the requirements of child and adult protection)
- Respond in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner
- Discuss the specific steps that can be taken to help the employee stay safe in the workplace
- Ensure the employee is aware of the options available to them
- Provide information to enable employees to seek the advice of other relevant agencies by calling 0808 2000 247, the 24 hour Freephone National Domestic Violence Helpline.

The Council recognises that perpetrators of domestic violence may wish to seek help and support voluntarily. They will have access, when appropriate, to help and support from the sources listed in this policy.

## 2.8 **Training managers to identify and respond appropriately**

The Council will develop a programme of training for managers to raise awareness of domestic violence and understanding of this policy and guidance.

Managers will be trained to:

- Identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties
- Provide initial support
- Offer referrals
- Discuss ways to help the person stay safe in the workplace
- Understand that they are not counsellors (Counselling is to be left to trained professionals and no one should attempt to act in place of a domestic violence expert or counsellor. The best practice for a manager is to refer the employee to the appropriate domestic violence resources.)

Support measures may include:

- Information on local advice and support agencies and helplines
- Access to appropriate, confidential independent professional counselling
- Time off when necessary eg to attend support agencies; solicitors; court hearings; for rehousing; or to alter childcare arrangements
- Availability of assertiveness training or confidence building
- Redeployment
- Safety planning for the workplace

## **3. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Council and may be revised in consultation with the Trade Union in light of changing legislation and current good practice.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Safe Towns, Safe Places, Safe Employers, Safe Schools and Safe Churches

These are available on our website:

<http://www.onustraining.co.uk/antrim-newtownabbey-borough-council>

Appendix 2 – ANBC – Line Manager Record Form

Appendix 3 – Safety Plan

Appendix 4 – Trusted Colleague contact form

Appendix 5 – List of Trusted Colleagues

**Workplace Domestic Violence**

**Appendix 2 - Line Manager Incident Record Form**

<b>Employee:</b>	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
<b>Line Manager:</b>	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
<b>Contact Details:</b>	
Contact:	In person [ <input type="checkbox"/> ] Telephone Call [ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
Date & Time:	
Details:	
<b>Meeting Facilitated:</b>	
Date:	
Time:	
Location:	

**Checklist:-**

Please confirm the following by ticking the box provided:-

- Employee has been issued with the Council's Domestic Violence Policy and this has been fully explained including the type of support which the Council may be able to offer
  
- Employee has been issued with the Council's Domestic Violence information leaflet
  
- Employee has been signposted to the 24 hour domestic violence helpline and is aware of the information & support provided by Women's Aid (where appropriate)

*THIS FORM IS TO BE FORWARDED IN A SEALED ENVELOPE TO THE SAFEGUARDING MANAGER.*



**Appendix 3 – Safety Plan**



**Employee Name:** .....

**Line Manager:** .....

**Trusted Colleague:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Safety Plan**

This safety plan has been adapted from a variety of existing plans. It should be used with a person who is living with or escaping violence. Remember it may not be safe for someone to fill in the plan and take it with them. Always offer to keep any information or documentation on your premises.

***Suggestions for increasing safety in the relationship***

- I will have important phone numbers available to my children and myself.
- I can tell ..... and ..... about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- If I leave my home, I can go (list four places):  
.....  
.....
- I can leave extra money, car keys, clothes and copies of documents with .....
- In an emergency I can use a code word or phrase to let my children know that I want them to get to safety immediately?
- When I leave I will bring .....
- To ensure safety and independence, I can: keep change for phone calls with me at all times; open my own savings account; rehearse my escape route with a support person; and review my safety plan on (date) .....
- When the violence begins which areas of the house should I avoid? E.g. bathroom (no exit), kitchen (potential weapons).....  
.....

***Suggestions for increasing safety when the relationship is over***

- I can: change the locks; install steel/metal doors; a security system; smoke detectors and an outside lighting system.
- I will inform..... and ..... that my partner no longer lives with me and ask them to call the police if s/he is observed near my home or children.
- I will tell people who take care of my children the names of those that have permission to pick them up. The people who have permission are ..... and .....
- When I make phone calls I can use 141 so my number cannot be traced.
- I will think about keeping safe when I use social networking sites.
- I can remove my name from the electoral roll, or restrict the information on it if necessary – I can do this by contacting the local Electoral Office.
- I can change my mobile phone, sim card and number to ensure that it is not traceable.
- I can tell ..... at work about my situation and ask ..... to screen my calls.
- I can avoid shops, banks and ..... that I used when living with my abusive partner.
- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call ..... for support.

### **Important phone numbers**



Understanding  
Domestic Violence.  
Ending Abuse.  
The Onus is on  
all of us.

- |          |       |
|----------|-------|
| Police   | ..... |
| Helpline | ..... |
| Friends  | ..... |
| Refuge   | ..... |

### *Items to take checklist*

- ✓ Identification
- ✓ Benefit books
- ✓ Birth certificates for me and my children
- ✓ Medical cards
- ✓ Phone card, mobile phone or change for a pay phone
- ✓ Money, bank books, credit cards
- ✓ Keys – house, car, office
- ✓ Keys to a friends or relatives house
- ✓ Medicine or medication
- ✓ Driver's license
- ✓ Change of clothes
- ✓ Passports, work permits, Home Office papers
- ✓ Divorce papers
- ✓ Lease/rental agreement, house deed
- ✓ Mortgage payment book
- ✓ Insurance papers
- ✓ Address book
- ✓ Pictures, jewellery, items of sentimental value
- ✓ Children's favourite toys/blankets
- ✓ Any proof of abuse, notes, tapes, diaries, crime reference numbers, names and numbers of professionals engaged.

**Workplace Domestic Violence**

**Appendix 4 - Trusted Colleague Record**

<b>Employee Seeking Support Details:</b>	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
<b>Trusted Colleague Details:</b>	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
<b>Initial Contact:</b>	
Initial Contact Established:	In person [ <input type="checkbox"/> ] Telephone Call [ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
Date & Time:	
<b>Meeting Facilitated:</b>	
Date:	
Time:	
Location:	
<b>Information disclosed to Trusted Colleague</b>	

**Information provided by the Trusted Colleague:**

**Agreed Action Plan:**

**Checklist:-**

Please confirm the following by ticking the box provided:-

- Employee has been issued with the Council's Domestic Violence Policy and this has been fully explained including the type of support which the Council may be able to offer
  
- Employee has been issued with the Council's Domestic Violence information leaflet
- Employee has been signposted to the 24 hour domestic violence helpline and is aware of the information & support provided by Women's Aid (where appropriate)
  
- The ONUS sample safety plan has been discussed with the staff member including the specific safety measures to be considered when a partner is considering leaving a relationship
  
- Safety in the workplace has been discussed and any specific risks have been addressed so far as reasonably practicable within the agreed action plan
  
- Employee has been advised of how their information will be retained and consents accordingly. Restrictions on confidentiality i.e. where there is a disclosure in relation to self harm or a risk to vulnerable adults or children have been discussed.

**Signature – Employee**

Signature:		Date:	
Print:		Job Title:	

**Signature – Trusted Colleague**

Signature:		Date:	
Print:		Job Title:	

- 
- *A COPY OF THIS FORM SHOULD BE COPIED FOR THE EMPLOYEE UPON REQUEST. HOWEVER, THE EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE INFORMED OF THE POTENTIAL RISKS INVOLVED AND THAT IT MAY NOT BE SAFE FOR THEM TO DO SO.*
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- *THIS FORM IS TO BE FORWARDED IN A SEALED ENVELOPE TO THE SAFEGUARDING MANAGER.*

## Appendix 5 - TRUSTED COLLEAGUES

Name	Department	Contact Number
Colin Meneely	Community Planning and Regeneration, Mossley Mill	028 90 340024
Caroline Douglas	Performance & Transformation, Antrim Civic Centre	028 90 340207
Denise Milligan	Sixmile Leisure Centre	028 93 341818
Gail Wallace	Valley Leisure Centre	028 90 340246
Angela Lindsay	Organisation Development, HR	028 90 340039
Joan Cowan	Organisation Development, HR	028 90 340105