

New Forest District Council's Domestic Abuse Supporting Employees Policy

Policy statement

New Forest District Council is committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and fulfilling its duty of care to all employees.

All employees who experience domestic abuse will be treated with dignity and respect. By adopting appropriate employment practices, the Council will make every effort to support employees who experience domestic abuse.

This policy defines the way in which the Council will support and respond to employees who are living with or recovering from domestic abuse, including both victims and perpetrators.

Policy aims

To ensure that all employees, not just those employees experiencing domestic abuse, are aware of the Council's policy, its implications and where to get advice, including employees who are perpetrating domestic abuse.

To ensure that all employees who ask for help in addressing domestic abuse can access appropriate advice and support, including signposting to other agencies. Provide easily accessible information for those staff who might not feel able to actively ask for help at work.

To ensure that all employees experiencing domestic abuse and seeking assistance are confident that their situation will be handled sympathetically and confidentially.

To provide guidance to managers on how to recognise potential victims, how to support and assist employees asking for help in addressing domestic issues, and how to deal with employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse.

To ensure that all managers can access guidance on how to support and assist employees asking for help in relation to domestic abuse, both victims/survivors and perpetrators.

To ensure the Council will support an employee through absence from work relating to domestic abuse.

To set out a framework for responding to an employee who is identified as being a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. Furthermore, this policy will be updated to reflect any particular points of learning which arise out of the Council's duties. This will ensure the document is fit for purpose and up to date.

Introduction

Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, religious belief, sexuality, disability, wealth, level of education and geography.

New Forest District Council recognises that this serious and widespread problem has a potentially detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of many employees and may impact on work performance through no fault of their own. We therefore have this policy to ensure that, as an employer, we respond in the best way possible. This means offering support and assistance to employees who experience domestic abuse, in whatever its form, thereby promoting the wellbeing of our workforce and ensuring the best possible service delivery to our customers.

Definition

The official Home Office definition of domestic abuse is:

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 regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

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.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Internal Support

New Forest District Council will:

- Believe employees who disclose experiences of domestic abuse.
- Seek to ensure that victims and survivors of abuse are not only listened to, but also feel heard in the Council’s response.
- Foster an environment that is open and supportive of anyone living with domestic abuse.
- Provide awareness, education and training for all staff.
- Undertake regular communication with staff about what domestic abuse is and how the Council can support employees, at individual, team and corporate level.
- Provide access to internal designated SPOC (Single Point of Contact) for Domestic Abuse who is part of the safeguarding team and other internal support.

Supporting an employee experiencing Domestic Abuse

New Forest District Council aims to offer an open, sensitive, supportive and non-judgemental environment, in which employees are encouraged to raise issues of domestic abuse with their line manager, service manager or another suitable manager within their department depending on who they feel most comfortable discussing it with.

Detailed guidance is available in the NFDC ‘Guide to Supporting Employees experiencing Domestic Abuse’ for both employees and managers – **please refer to this document** and use the resources within it **whenever possible** to ensure the correct support and advice is offered.

The Council is committed to ensuring support for employees and recognises that every individual’s circumstances and needs will be different. The Council aims to ensure that staff have access to support in achieving their needs and wishes.

Confidentiality

Employees should consider what the Council and / or their trade union may be able to do to help and which of the support measures available they may wish to explore.

Any breach of confidentiality could have serious consequences for the safety of the employee concerned. Information will only be shared with others where necessary to do so. The employee **should** be told who will be informed, and why.

Safeguarding

There are some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured such as concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the manager needs to act to protect the safety of employees and their families.

Where there is significant concern for the employee's safety or concern that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, information must be passed on. It is preferable to obtain the employee's consent to do this but if they will not give consent, the relevant social care team **must** still be informed. Where this is believed to be the case for a child the local authority has specific statutory obligations, and a referral must be made to Children's Services.

The need to share information in relation to the safeguarding and protection of children or vulnerable adults overrides data protection and confidentiality obligations.

New Forest District Council has a duty to ensure a safe working environment for all our employees. If the alleged perpetrator presents a threat to the employee whilst at work, it may be advisable to inform the employee's colleagues. Careful consideration should be given to empower the victim in understanding the benefits of making relevant disclosures to colleagues who may be able to provide extra support.

Record keeping and personal data

Managers must keep accurate documentation and records of domestic abuse concerns as these may have an important role in providing evidence.

Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

New Forest District Council is committed to promoting zero tolerance of domestic abuse. This policy demonstrates that domestic abuse is unacceptable, and the Council will not condone behaviour resulting in domestic abuse.

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

Employees are expected to conduct themselves, both inside and outside of work, in a way which upholds the reputation of the Council. Committing domestic abuse is a criminal offence and may result in disciplinary action.

Further advice for those who are being violent or abusive in their relationship can be found on the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership's website:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/domesticabuse/iamhurtingsomeone>

Related documents

To help with the application of this policy it may be useful to read the following documents which are all on Forestnet:

- Worksmart Policy – listed under Templates and Forms
- Flexible Working Policy – Management Advice Note 5.31
- Codes of Conduct
- Leave Entitlements – Management Advice Note 3.5

Additional support

Other relevant policies and procedures:

- Data protection <http://forestnet/dataprotection>
- Safeguarding Policy <http://forestnet/safeguarding>

Further information and links to support are available in the How to guide – Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse. It is imperative that you read, understand and refer to this policy and supporting guidance.

Access to free, confidential and impartial Employee Support is also available to all employees. Please visit the webpages for further information:

- Online: www.my-eap.com Login: newforestwell
- Tel: 0800 1116 387
From Abroad: +44 845 330 5132
For Manager Support: 0800 1116 385 (9am - 6pm Mon- Fri)

External support

Hampshire Constabulary 101 (or 999 in an emergency)

Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership

Advice Line (for public and professional queries): 03300 165 112

Website (detailing all domestic abuse support contacts):

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/domesticabuse>

Please contact the SPOC for Domestic Abuse or another member of the safeguarding team if details are required for other areas.

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