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## Domestic Abuse Policy Statement

### Introduction

Cumbria County Council recognises that some of its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse. It may be as a survivor, someone who is currently living with domestic abuse; someone who has been impacted by a domestic abuse or someone who perpetrates domestic abuse.

It is the Council's policy that every employee who is experiencing / has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that this will be treated sympathetically, sensitively, and, where possible, confidentially.

The Council has a 'zero tolerance' position on domestic abuse and is committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that they will receive support and assistance. We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is no room for violence or abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. This policy statement also covers the approach we will take where an employee is a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

By developing an effective domestic abuse policy statement and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. Domestic abuse has clear implications for the workforce, affecting attendance and presenteeism, staff turnover and mental wellbeing. It could also affect workplace teams, who may be caught up in a colleague's distress or in supporting them to move on.

We recognise that domestic abuse has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. However, domestic abuse does effect men as well as women and it should also not be assumed that only a husband / male partner is a threat because abusers may include wives, relatives, and same-sex partners.

We undertake to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development. This policy statement will apply to all staff. This policy is part of Cumbria County Council's commitment to the welfare and safety of all staff.

## Scope

This policy statement applies to all permanent and fixed term County Council/Schools employees covered by Green book, Burgundy book and Grey book, casual workers and volunteers, including people engaged to work for the council through agencies.

It is expected that governing bodies of all community and voluntary controlled schools would adopt this procedure. Foundation and voluntary aided schools and academies are encouraged to do the same.

This policy statement is intended to be safety focussed and supportive of victims of domestic abuse.

## Definition

The terms domestic violence and domestic abuse now tend to be used interchangeably. The Domestic Abuse Act defines domestic abuse and can be found [here](#). In summary the 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:

- physical
- sexual
- psychological
- financial / economic
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is: 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 is: 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 also 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.

## Principles

We believe that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator.

We will treat every victim as an individual as everyone's circumstances are different. Once a victim raises a concern about domestic abuse, they will be offered appropriate support and information on protection and help.

A survivor's experiences of domestic abuse may be compounded by racist reactions, isolation, language and cultural barriers or other reactions to age, sexuality, or disability. The same

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access to information and support should be available for everyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Assumptions about what action is appropriate will not be based on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Employees will be informed of their right to contact their trade union.

## Confidentiality

If an individual makes a disclosure that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they must be assured that the information they provide is confidential. Consent will be sought if information is to be shared and all relevant governance will be observed.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when:

- There are concerns regarding children (for instance, if an employee gives information which suggests that their child or another child is at risk of abuse -whether physical, emotional, sexual or through neglect).
- If there is concern around vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of other employees, or
- If it is believed an employee and/or colleague(s) are at risk of serious injury or death.

In these circumstances, the individual should be informed of the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained.

Where there are concerns regarding children, the manager/supervisor needs to be satisfied that appropriate steps are being taken to protect children and if they are not satisfied, they must consider making a referral to Children's Services.

If there is concern for a vulnerable adult's safety, the manager/supervisor should inform the individual that they are seeking further advice from an appropriate agency such as the Council's Safeguarding Adults Team or by completing a Safeguarding Adult Concern (SAC)

Managers have a duty to maintain a safe secure working environment for all employees and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks as part of safety planning. The manager should advise the individual concerned fully what information they will be sharing with colleagues and confirm the basis for it.

Managers should remind employees that this information is confidential and any unauthorised breaches of this or improper disclosure of information could result in disciplinary action being taken. The consequences of breaching confidentiality could also have very serious consequences for the person experiencing domestic abuse.

It is important that the employee is made aware of the above at the beginning of any discussions.

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## Disclosure of abuse

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a variety of sources. This could include:

- Line manager/Headteacher
- Colleague
- Trade union representative
- Health Advocate
- People Management

It is not their role to counsel victims, but they can offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

We will respond sympathetically, supportively, and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse. Managers should consult with the employee and consider what actions that they can make to support victims of domestic abuse this could include, but is not limited to:

- Temporary adaptations to the victim's working patterns
- Using other existing policies (e.g. flexible working)
- Signpost and support Safety Planning (set out below)
- Paid time off to victims (see 'Paid Time Off for Urgent Domestic Leave' provisions of the Time Off work procedure)
- Signposting to counselling/support services

## Safety planning

Research suggests 75% of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work; from threatening calls to harassment and arriving unannounced. We have a duty of care to all our employees and we will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, we will encourage employees to contact a specialist support agency or a member of staff who can undertake a DASH (Domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence risk assessment – [www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk](http://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk)) and make appropriate referrals where necessary. Support agencies contact details are made available in Appendix 1.

We will work with the employee and specialist services to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety and, if applicable, the safety of their children as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, taking into account the duty of care for all employees.

## If the victim and the perpetrator work in the same organisation

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the same organisation the Council will take appropriate action.

Action should be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim. This

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may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices.

## Training

We are committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings, or awareness raising sessions will be rolled out to ensure that all managers are able to:

- Identify the warning signs of domestic abuse
- Respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner
- Understand that the victim's attitude to their domestic situation may vary over time
- Provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
- Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning.
- Understand that a victim may be subject to abuse from another perpetrator after entering into a new relationship
- Signpost to internal and external sources of support.
- Understand that they are not counsellors.

## Role of colleagues

We encourage all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of this statement. Signs of potential domestic abuse are available in Appendix 2.

## Perpetrators of domestic abuse

The Code of Conduct and other appropriate Professional Codes inform staff of the standards of conduct expected of them. They identify principles governing behaviour by which employees are expected to abide. Employees are always expected to present high standards of personal integrity, honest, respect and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation both at work and also outside of work.

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances.

We will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence or any allegation that an individual assisted an abuser in carrying out and/or perpetrating domestic abuse seriously and as a potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

In most cases, the matter will be investigated under the Council's disciplinary procedure as potential gross misconduct which may, if proven, render the employee liable to dismissal without notice.

## Review

This statement will be reviewed every three years unless there are changes in legislation, best practice, or other organisation policies impact on its effectiveness.

Should further clarification be required in relation to the consultation and / or implementation process please contact The Local Authority Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

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## APPENDIX 1

### SIGNPOSTING

#### EMERGENCY HOUSING

**Allerdale – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** 01900 702584

**Barrow – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** 01229 876599 or 01229 311102

**Copeland – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** 01946 598475 or 07776151831

**Carlisle – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** - 01228 817079

**Eden – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** 01768 861414

**South Lakeland – DA Partnership Support (Housing)** - 01539 73333

#### LOCAL SERVICES

**Safety Net** 01228515859 or 07748 682 600

Domestic Abuse Trauma informed Counselling and Support services. Safety Net will provide weekly trauma informed therapeutic or support sessions and have practical and emotional support in place. The service will also provide advice and signpost where necessary.

**Gateway 4 Women** 01228212090

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Drop-in Centre, web updates, one to one telephone referrals, assessments and sessions.

**Women Out West (Whitehaven)** 01946 550103

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Drop-in Centre, web updates, one to one telephone referrals, assessments and sessions.

**Women Community Matters (Barrow)** 01229 311102

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Currently support is being provided via telephone calls and email only. The sessions being offered include: My Relationships & Me, Time for Thought, Pause for Thought and Petals.

**The Freedom Project** – 07712117986

Provides Domestic Abuse Counselling and Trauma Support Services.

**Victim Support** 0300 3030 157 or 08081689111

Victim Support provides support to domestic abuse victims who are at all risk levels of abuse.

**Birchall Trust** 01229 820828

Counselling Survivors of Rape and Sexual Abuse.

**Bridgeway/SARC** 0808 118 6432

The Bridgeway Sexual Assault Support Services provide advice and online resources to help offer the right support and advice to service users who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

**Springfield DA Refuge and Outreach** 01539 720313 or 07946 101820

Accommodation and outreach support programmes

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## **NATIONAL SERVICES**

### **National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247**

The helpline is run by Refuge and a live online chat is also available.

### **Women's Aid**

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. They provide local support services, training for organisations and information if you are worried about someone else. They also have a live chat facility.

### **Rape Crisis 0808 802 9999**

They have a network of independent Rape Crisis centres that provide specialist support and services for victims and survivors of sexual violence. They have a National Rape Crisis Helpline and a live chat.

### **Rights of Women**

Provides advice to women on family, criminal and immigration law issues. Different phone lines for family, criminal and immigration law issues are listed here.

### **Jewish Women's Aid 0800 591203**

Jewish Women's Aid supports Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence.

### **Women with learning difficulties: 020 8522 0675**

### **Southall Black Sisters 020 8571 9595**

Advice and information on domestic abuse, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African and African-Caribbean women.

### **Muslim Women's Helpline: 020 8904 8193 or 020 8908 6715**

The Muslim Women's Helpline aims to provide any Muslim girl or woman in a crisis with a free, confidential listening service and referral to Islamic consultants, plus practical help and information where required.

### **Asian Women's Resource Centre 020 8961 6549**

The Asian Women's Resource Centre provides a domestic violence and advocacy service. They provide support to women in need in the following languages: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Hinko, Konkani, Marathi, Pashto, Patwari, Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Kurdish, Turkish and Azerbaijani. They also offer support services around housing, welfare benefits, debt (signposting) and employment, as well as running immigration surgeries for those in need of specialist immigration advice.

### **IKWRO: Women's rights organisation 020 7920 6460**

Specialist advice and help to Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls who are at risk of 'honour' based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic violence.

### **Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on forced marriages: 020 7008 0151**

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**Galop** 0800 999 5428

Galop, the LGBT+ anti-violence charity, provides hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence support services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans+ victims/survivors by telephone, email, text and WhatsApp.

**Respect phonenumber** 0808 802 4040

An anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. Concerned friends or family members and front-line workers assisting abusers can also call for information and support.

**ManKind Initiative** 01823 334 244

A national charity that provides help and support for male survivors of domestic abuse and domestic violence.

**Respect Men's Advice Line** 0808 801 0327; a webchat is available at certain times

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them.

**Samaritans** 116 123



## Appendix 2

### Signs someone might be experiencing Domestic Abuse

#### Work productivity signs

- Change in the person's working patterns, for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
- Reduced quality and quantity of work, missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- Change in the use of the phone/email, for example a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- Spending an increased amount of hours at work for no reason

#### Changes in behaviour or demeanour

- Conduct out of character with previous employment history
- Changes in behaviour, for example becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed etc
- Isolating themselves from colleagues
- Obsession with timekeeping
- Secretive regarding home life
- Worried about leaving children at home with abuser

#### Physical signs

- Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations
- Change in the pattern or amount of make up used
- Change in the manner of dress, for example clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries
- Substance use / misuse
- Fatigue / sleep disorders

#### Other signs

- Partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace
- Partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule
- Flowers / gifts sent to employee for no apparent reason
- Isolation from family / friends