



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (the Joint Board) recognises that domestic violence and abuse has no place in society and is committed to helping eradicate abuse. The Joint Board strongly promotes the view that domestic violence and abuse must not and will not be tolerated and will promote the right to live free from violence and abuse in any form and that the responsibility for violence lies with the perpetrator.
- 1.2 The Joint Board will strive to create a working environment that supports and promotes this view and will help those involved in, or experiencing, domestic violence and abuse. Furthermore, the Joint Board has an ethical and legal responsibility to:
 - Take reasonable steps to promote equality and reduce the risk of gender-based violence; and
 - Take action where incidents occur or allegations of abuse are raised.
- 1.3 The Joint Board must, as far as is reasonably practicable, protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work by establishing an environment in which employees are safe to disclose their experience of abuse in order to access support and increase safety for themselves and others. However, the right of employees not to disclose must be respected and no employee must ever feel pressured into sharing this information if they do not wish to do so.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government and COSLA, in association with a wide range of specialist support organisations, developed a strategy “Equally Safe – Scotland’s Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls”. This policy has taken into account the recommendations outlined in that strategy.
- 1.5 The Joint Board will provide support for victims including practical help and legal assistance.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The Joint Board recognises that domestic abuse is a gender issue but also that it can be, and is, an issue for men, women and intersex people. Research shows that women are more likely to experience domestic violence and abuse than men and do suffer more serious injury and ongoing assaults than men. However, it should be acknowledged that men can experience domestic abuse from their female partner and that domestic abuse also occurs in same-sex relationships.
- 2.2 The Joint Board will at all times seek to ensure that an employee’s human rights are respected and that approaches are in line with the requirements of the Equality Act, in terms of preventing discrimination and harassment, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different protected groups.
- 2.3 This policy will apply equally to all employees of the Joint Board irrespective of age; disability; sex; gender re-assignment; ethnicity; religion or belief; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; and pregnancy and maternity.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 **Domestic abuse** - the abuse of power and control over one person by another and can take many forms including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and financial abuse as well as coercive control.
- 3.2 **Gender-based violence** – violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately and is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.
- 3.3 **Harassment and Stalking** – unwanted, persistent, often threatening attention such following someone, constantly phoning, texting, emailing at home or work.
- 3.4 **Honour crimes** – violence excused as forms of punishment for behaviour which is perceived as deviating from what a family or members of a community believes to be the “correct” form of behaviour sometimes referred to as “family honour”.

4 Key Principles

The Policy aims to:

- Ensure confidential and sympathetic handling of situations for employees arising from domestic violence and abuse.
- Assist and support employees requesting help in addressing problems arising from domestic violence and abuse.
- Provide a framework for addressing the behaviour of employees who may be perpetrators of abuse and who may pose a risk to others within the context of their work.

5 Confidentiality and Record keeping

- 5.1 All advice, information and support provided to an employee will remain confidential. No information will be disclosed without the express consent of the employee. However, where issues regarding the protection of children or adults in need of support arise, then child or adult protection services may need to be involved. In these circumstances, local child/adult protection procedures must be followed.
- 5.2 Any records will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Joint Board’s information handling policy and procedures. It should be made clear that the recording of information on domestic violence and abuse will have no adverse impact on the employee’s work record.

6 Guidance for Managers

- 6.1 The Joint Board is working towards creating a safe and supportive environment, which encourages people to report domestic violence and abuse. Managers have a role in supporting these employees and addressing their needs. Where an employee raises their experience of domestic violence and abuse managers should endeavour to provide flexible support tailored to meet the circumstances of each individual, taking into account needs that they may have.

- 6.2 Managers should be aware of potential barriers that make it difficult for employees to seek support and should be conscious not to make judgements or to provide counselling or advice but seek expert input where appropriate.
- 6.3 Where an employee feels more comfortable discussing the situation out with their own service area, they should contact West Dunbartonshire Council's Strategic HR (WDC HR).
- 6.4 It is of the utmost importance in serious situations such as these that communication between the manager and the employee is clear and unambiguous.

Recognising the Problem

- 6.5 Detailed below are some examples of indicators that may mean an employee is suffering from domestic violence and abuse:
- Sudden changes in behaviour such as an employee becoming withdrawn and quiet and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons.
 - Changes in the way an employee dresses for example excessive clothing on a hot day, changes to the amount of make-up used which may indicate the covering up of signs of physical violence.
 - Injuries such as bruises that are explained away; explanations for injuries that may seem inconsistent with the injuries displayed.
 - High absenteeism without explanation.
 - Overly secretive about home life.
 - Appearing to be isolated from friends and family.
 - Interruptions at work e.g. repeated upsetting calls/texts/emails; reluctance to turn off mobile phone at work.

Responding to an Employee

- 6.6 Where an employee advises their manager that they are a victim of domestic violence and/or abuse the manager should:
- Believe an employee if they disclose that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse – do not ask for proof.
 - Discuss the employee's immediate and future safety and assist them to think through their options e.g. a safety plan, support networks, protection strategies and provide telephone numbers for organisations that can help such as the police, women's aid, men's aid and rape crisis.
 - Reassure the employee that the Joint Board has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.
 - Undertake a risk assessment to ensure that the potential risk to employees and colleagues is lessened. Provide a range of practical workplace safety

measures such as an assumed name at work or mutual agreement of a safe, confidential method of communication.

- Be aware of the parameters of your role as a manager and make clear to the employee what you can and cannot provide.

Providing Support

6.7 There are a number of supports that managers can put in place for victims of domestic violence and abuse:

- With the consent of the employee, divert phone calls or change phone extension number if employee is receiving harassing calls.
- Agree with the employee what, if anything, to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their partner or former partner telephones or visits the workplace.
- Keep a record of any incidents of abuse or violence in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.
- Support the employee in a sympathetic, non-judgemental and confident manner.
- Offer the services of the Employee Counselling Service or other appropriate agencies details of which are attached as Appendix 1.
- Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that the employee has arrangements for getting safely to and from work.
- Consider if work related adjustments to the job are necessary, possible adjustments are detailed at Appendix 2.
- Grant special leave for appointments where necessary and related to the employee's circumstances e.g. re-arrange housing or childcare, court appointments, solicitor or support agencies.

Additional Information

6.8 Managers should not deal with the abuse themselves but make it clear to employees that they will be supported. They should outline what help is available and the various ways the Joint Board can support them.

6.9 Each employee's needs are different and managers should maintain confidentiality throughout the process and be prepared to handle any speculation which may arise from the employee's colleagues.

6.10 If an employee's work performance has been deteriorating prior to their disclosure of domestic violence and abuse then managers should monitor closely and take advice from WDC HR as required to ensure that all appropriate supports are in place. Any changes to the working pattern or other support offered to the employee may be enough to remedy any issues with the employee's work performance/ attendance.

- 6.11 Employees must have the chance to consider all the available options and decide for themselves how they wish to handle matters.
- 6.12 Regular contact should be maintained with the employee and support measures put in place should be reviewed to establish if they are effective or if any alternative measures are required.
- 6.13 Domestic violence and abuse can affect both sexes and in responding to employees you are expected to be available and approachable. Listen, reassure and respond in a sensible and non-judgemental manner and discuss how the Joint Board can support the employee concerned.

Employee who does not wish support

- 6.14 Although the Joint Board will seek to provide a supportive environment in which an employee can raise issues relating to domestic violence and abuse, depending on their situation, some employees affected by domestic abuse may refuse support or only take up partial support. Dealing with domestic violence and abuse is a process that takes time and there are various reasons why employees may find it difficult to seek support. For example, they may have pressures from family to remain silent/stay in the relationship; financial pressures may restrict their options especially if children are involved; and/or they may feel it is safer to stay – it should be noted that women are likely to experience the most significant episode of violence at the point of ending an abusive relationship or once the relationship has ended.
- 6.15 It is the employee's choice whether or not to accept support and managers should respect their decision, reassure them that the Joint Board's primary concern is for their safety and remind them that support is available if they need it in the future.
- 6.16 Even if a manager disagrees with the decisions being made by an employee regarding an employee's relationship it is important to understand that a victim of domestic violence and abuse may make a number of attempts to leave their partner before they are finally able to do so.
- 6.17 The role of the manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear through the Policy that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.

7 Guidance for Employees

- 7.1 Employees are encouraged to respond appropriately if they suspect that a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees may not want to discuss the abuse but concerns should be raised in confidence with a manager.
- 7.2 Some victims of domestic abuse will feel unable to accept help, which you may find difficult to understand. Offer support, where possible, but do not force an individual to disclose abuse or to follow a course of action they are uncomfortable with.
- 7.3 Any concerns about the employee should be raised in confidence and where possible with the permission of the individual. Never divulge personal information about colleagues with others, including other colleagues, without their permission. If an employee is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them information or where the perpetrator is also an employee by

giving them access to facilities such as telephones, email or fax machines then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

- 7.4 Witnessing a colleague experience domestic abuse can be traumatic and you may feel powerless or unable to help. Support can be sought from managers or from the support agencies detailed at Appendix 1.

8 Employees who are abusers

- 8.1 Where the Joint Board has received information sufficient to believe that an employee has perpetrated domestic violence and/or abuse an appropriate manager will promptly assess such behaviour and the job the employee is employed to do. In such circumstances the Joint Board will investigate the facts and decide whether the disciplinary procedure will be invoked.
- 8.2 Depending on the circumstances and the nature of the employee's job, a disciplinary hearing may result in disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal.
- 8.3 It is a condition of your employment that if you are arrested, charged, convicted of a criminal offence, bound over or cautioned, pending appointment to, or whilst employed in the Joint Board's service that you report details of the matter to your Line Manager, or a more Senior Manager, who may decide to investigate the matter taking account of the Joint Board's Code of Conduct. Where information on un-notified criminal charges comes to the Joint Board's attention this will be discussed with you and appropriate action taken.
- 8.4 This applies to conduct outside work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) including posts or contents on social media, or while at work where an employee has used workplace resources such as work time, telephones, email or information to harass their current or former partner.
- 8.5 Perpetrators may intentionally misuse their job-related authority to negatively impact on domestic abuse victims. By spreading rumours or manipulative behaviour they may influence others to assist them in locating their partners, in perpetrating acts of domestic abuse or to protect themselves. It is important that the public has high levels of trust in our employees and managers should be concerned about perpetrators bringing the organisation into disrepute by misusing workplace information and resources, and their authority.
- 8.6 Any employees who are alleged perpetrators of abuse within the workplace may be dealt with in accordance with the Joint Board's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
- 8.7 Employees may be subject to investigation under the Disciplinary Policy in the following circumstances:
- If they have committed a criminal offence, or there is evidence of assault, harassment or coercive control.
 - If they are involved in domestic abuse related incidents that occur in the workplace or during work time, including making threatening telephone calls or misuse of the computer network.
 - If an employee's activities outside work have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed, or are likely to bring the Joint

Board into disrepute. This is particularly relevant for those who work with the public, with children or vulnerable adults.

- 8.8 Perpetrators rarely self refer to support agencies, when managers are aware that an employee has violent or abusive behaviour they should encourage them to seek help from a specialist agency. Details of support agencies for perpetrators can be found at Appendix 3.

Allegations without foundation

- 8.9 Where an employee has made an allegation without foundation that another employee is perpetrating abuse this will be investigated and addressed through the Disciplinary Policy.

Victimisation

- 8.10 Employees should not suffer victimisation as a result of the application of any aspect of this Policy. Where there is evidence that an employee has been victimised this will be investigated and addressed through the Disciplinary Policy.

9 Review

- 9.1 This Policy will be reviewed in line with any related new or amendments to legislation or best practice as required.

Appendix 1 – Useful telephone numbers/Contacts

Local Services

West Dunbartonshire Council Homelessness Service	0800 197 1004 (Out of Hours Services)
West Dunbartonshire HSCP (Social Work Services)	0800 811 505 (Out of Hours Services)
CARA Project (Challenging And Responding to Abuse) Free and independent service that provides short to medium term support for women living with or escaping domestic abuse.	01389 738680
Clydebank Women's Aid	0141 952 8118
Dumbarton District Women's Aid	01389 751036
Police Scotland	Call 101 to report an incident or report an incident online on the Police Scotland website In an emergency please call 999
Strathclyde Police Domestic Abuse Unit	0141 532 3334
Time for Talking – Employee Counselling Service	Employee Helpline 0800 970 3980

National Services

Women's Aid Federations around the UK (office numbers only)	0131 226 6606 (Scotland)
Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline A service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. It is run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. Callers may first of all hear an answer phone message before speaking to a person.	0800 027 1234
Women's Aid National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
The Samaritans The Samaritans is a nationwide charity which provides 24 hour confidential emotional support to anyone in crisis. The Samaritans has introduced a single national telephone number to link up all branches with one easy to remember, low-cost number although callers will still be able to use their local branch number if they wish. This number can be found in your local telephone directory.	116 123
Freecall message home This is confidential, non-traceable service for those who have left home but want to pass on a message to family and friends without communicating directly. People escaping domestic violence can use this service without having to give details of where they are. This is a free service.	116 000
The National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC) This is a free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk, including children themselves. The service offers counselling, information and advice.	0800 800500
Childline A national, confidential counselling line for children, young people and adults on any issue including family, marital and relationship problems, child abuse rape and sexual assault, depression and anxiety.	0800 1111

Specialist Services

Hemat Gryffe, Womens Aid Asian, Black and Minority Ethnic Women's Aid Group in Scotland which provides a safe refuge accommodation, information and support.	0141 353 0859
Jewish Women's Aid The only specialist organisation in the UK supporting Jewish women affected by domestic violence.	0800 591 203
Women with Learning Difficulties Supporting women with learning difficulties overcome domestic violence and abuse.	0808 2000 247
GALOP National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Domestic Violence Helpline provides confidential support to all members of the LGBT communities, their families, friends and agencies supporting them. Ran by trained LGBT people.	0800 999 5428
Fearless http://www.fearless.scot/ The service works with survivors of domestic abuse over 16 years old of all races, religions, beliefs, abilities, gender identities, sexes or sexual orientations. Fearless offers non-judgmental, one-to-one support for individuals experiencing domestic abuse. Dedicated case workers will offer mentoring and tailored support in areas such as: healthcare, housing, emotional support, practical support, safety planning, addictions and assistance to access appropriate benefits. The service also offers practical support for survivors to access a range of services and will support appropriate inclusion within communities.	0131 624 7266

Mens Services

Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS) A national organisation dedicated to supporting men who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse.	0808 800 0024
Men's Aid Providing support to men on a number of issues, including domestic abuse.	0333 567 0556
Men's Advice Line Advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse.	0808 801 0327
Mankind Initiative National charity that provides help and support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence.	01823 334 244
Victim Support Male Helpline Helpline for victims of domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault.	0345 603 9213

Appendix 2 – Example Work Related Adjustments

It may be necessary when supporting an employee to consider the need for making work related adjustments. Examples of work related adjustments are:

- Change work patterns or adjust workload for temporary period to make it more manageable.
- Give favourable consideration to any request for a change of workplace/work arrangement.
- Approve requests for an advance of pay.
- Agree that an employee can use an assumed name at work.
- Review the security of information held such as temporary or new addresses, bank or healthcare details.
- With the employees consent, advise colleagues of the situation on a need to know basis and agree the response should the perpetrator/alleged perpetrator contact the workplace or present themselves at the workplace.
- At times when the employee needs to be absent from work, mutually agree a safe, confidential method of communication and consider safety implications that may arise when working from home.
- Implement particular security arrangements that may have to be put in place to ensure the safety of the employee and colleagues.

Appendix 3 - Support Agencies for Perpetrators

<p>Respect Phonline Confidential and anonymous helpline offering advice, information and support to anyone concerned about their violence and/or abuse towards a partner or ex-partner.</p>	<p>Phone: 0808 802 4040 (Phonline opened Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm) Email: info@respectphonline.org.uk</p>
<p>RESPECT The National Association for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Support Services. RESPECT hold a full list of Perpetrator Programmes in the UK (including those that accept self-referral), together with counsellors, etc trained in this field.</p>	<p>Phone: 0845 122 8609 Email: info@respect.uk.net</p>
<p>Everyman Project Counselling, support and advice to men who are violent or concerned about their violence and any one affected by that violence.</p>	<p>Phone: 0207 263 8884</p>
<p>AVP Britain (Alternatives to Violence Project) Run workshops through the country for anyone who has niggle little resentments that become grudges, anyone who gets upset at being ignored, anyone who has difficulty with anger, anyone who is a bully, or is bullied, in fact, anyone who wants an alternative to violence.</p>	<p>Phone: 020 7324 4755</p>
<p>Brian Nelson's Abuse Pages Website created and maintained by an ex-abuser. Descriptive pages on the cycle of abuse.</p>	<p>Website: http://blainn.com/abuse/</p>