

Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Policy

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CONTENTS

	PAGE NUMBER
Policy Statement	1
Aims	2
Scope	2
Equalities	3
Confidentiality, Protection and Security	3
Definitions	3- 4
Responsibilities	5
Disclosure	5
How Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Impacts on Work	5- 6
Guidance Note 1 – Victims/Survivors	7-10
Guidance Note 2 – Perpetrators	11-12
Guidance Note 3 – Managers	13-20
Guidance Note 4 – Work Colleagues	21-22
Appendix A – Support Agencies	23-28
Appendix B – Asking Difficult Questions	29-30

POLICY STATEMENT

Carmarthenshire County Council along with Welsh Government recognise that women and girls disproportionately experience repeat incidents of domestic abuse, all forms of sexual violence, harassment and other forms of abuse such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. It is important to recognise the gender disparity in order to fully address the issues. However, we recognise that men and boys experience and are affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse, and we must provide an effective response to *anyone* who experiences it.

As one of the largest employers in South West Wales our core values underpin and guide the way we work. Our commitment provides us with the focus to ensure the communities we serve and our employees, thrive, are safe, and feel protected.

The Council is committed to tackling all forms of violence and abuse, including Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, disability, gender identity and expression, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Domestic abuse can also manifest itself in specific ways within different communities.

We will work in partnership with other agencies or bodies in the statutory or voluntary sector to combat domestic abuse, sexual violence and all other forms of gender-based violence which affect not only children and families but the community as a whole.

The Council recognises, respects and supports its employees' life choices in a non-judgemental and inclusive way. To reinforce this commitment this policy is written using gender-neutral language which applies to anyone and everyone.

We recognise that our employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, either as victims/survivors, friends, family or colleagues of victims/ survivors; or perpetrators of domestic abuse, sexual or gender-based violence. The Council is committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for violence and abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse, sexual or gender-based violence lies with the perpetrator.

This form of abuse is often hidden and difficult to identify but frequently extends into work itself. Whilst at work employed victims can be harassed by abusive partners. Economic abuse can sabotage the victims' employment and career prospects and can include hiding money/cards needed for travel, ruining work clothes, making a person purposefully late, causing injury or harm that leads to sickness absence, or how the victim is able to participate in work-related activities such as away days, training or social events.

All forms of Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence or Sexual Violence are not acceptable; anyone experiencing this kind of abuse is not to blame and is not alone. Help and support is available. There is no excuse for abuse.

POLICY AIMS

We have developed this policy as part of our commitment to support our employees' health and wellbeing at work and to promote a safe working environment where employees feel able to talk about these issues. It covers the internal and external support available to employees experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence, or gender-based violence including appointing a member of staff as a nominated point of contact, special leave provisions and signposting to external sources of advice and help.

The policy -

- outlines the role of Carmarthenshire County Council in supporting employees who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse and/or sexual or gender-based violence;
- facilitates the Council applying appropriate procedures where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence; if their behaviour endangers other Council employees; or is under investigation as a criminal offence; or their activities outside of work have an impact on their ability to perform their role; or are likely to bring the Council into disrepute. Where possible, a perpetrator who is an employee will be supported to seek help to change their behaviour;
- enables employees experiencing domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence to remain safe and productive whilst at work;
- aids managers in recognising the signs of domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence; responding sensitively in handling disclosures; and in seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse/sexual violence;
- without prejudging or making assumptions, assist those experiencing domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence to identify options which provide tailored, practical support;
- demonstrates the Council's commitment to working in partnership with other agencies and bodies in the statutory or voluntary sector to combat domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence;
- reinforces our corporate social responsibility objectives by demonstrating that we value, and are prepared to support, staff during difficult periods; and
- raises awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse/sexual violence on victims and their families;
- demonstrates the commitment of the Council to support employees in making positive changes and to provide a safe and positive working environment.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees other than those in educational establishments with delegated powers. In the absence of any agreed policy and where an employee of a school requires support, it is recommended the governing body apply the principles within this document.

EQUALITY OF TREATMENT

This policy must be applied consistently to all employees irrespective of race, colour, ethnic or national origins (including citizenship), language, disability, religion, belief or non-belief, age, sex (male, female or non-binary), gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, parental, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information obtained as a result of domestic abuse, sexual or gender-based violence will be dealt with in the utmost confidence. However, there may be limited circumstances where information may be disclosed such as when others could be put at risk or where there are child or adult protection concerns.

PROTECTION AND SECURITY

Under Health and Safety legislation the Council has a duty to protect the health and safety of its employees. Where the perpetrator and the victim both work for the Council, the Council will take all reasonable steps to stop any abuse, using workplace policies and procedures.

In the majority of cases the perpetrator will not be employed by the Council, but steps will be taken to ensure that the victim and their colleagues are not at risk from the perpetrator entering the workplace. Such measures should include reinforcing security measures to ensure that the public cannot access staff areas without authorisation.

All employees must also be reminded at regular intervals that they should not answer enquiries from members of the public about colleagues' working hours, leave or other arrangements.

DEFINITIONS

For ease of reading this policy, reference is made to domestic abuse, or domestic, gender-based or sexual violence to encompass the definitions given in greater detail below. The policy applies equally to domestic abuse and sexual violence in all relationships regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It also applies where abuse occurs between generations in a family.

The Government defines **§ Domestic abuse** as *any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners, family members or personally connected, regardless of gender or sexuality.* (Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents whether directly related, in-laws or step-family. However, this is not an exhaustive list and may also be extended to uncles, aunts and cousins etc.) **§ The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 guidance provides a more detailed definition [Domestic abuse: draft statutory guidance framework \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](#)**

The definition can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse -

- physical
- emotional

- psychological
- sexual
- financial
- honour-based abuse
- female genital mutilation, and
- forced marriage

Victims of abuse are not confined to one gender, religion or ethnic group and what constitutes domestic abuse is commonly misunderstood. It is important to remember that no single act defines it; there are a wide range of activities and behaviours that amount to domestic abuse which are often dangerous and can be life-threatening.

The following paragraphs provide clarification on the types of abuse used by perpetrators of domestic abuse to exploit their victims.

Physical violence is only one aspect of domestic abuse and an abuser's behaviour can vary, from being very brutal and degrading to small actions that leave the victim feeling humiliated. **Domestic abuse** is *unlawful* and can involve a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviours, including threats; intimidation; harassment including stalking; financial control; exploiting another's resources and capacities for their own personal gain; emotional abuse; destructive criticism; disrespect; pressure tactics; isolation from friends, family or support; depriving someone of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape; tracking movements through their mobile phone or by other electronic means; and regulating their everyday behaviour – what they wear, who they see. This coercive control used by the perpetrator intended to harm, punish or frighten, is also *unlawful*.

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act or activity. It can include rape, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, prostitution, female genital mutilation, sexual bullying, making threats of sexual violence, sexual abuse within partnerships, and sexual harassment (unwanted contact on the grounds of your sex or unwanted physical verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature).

Victims and perpetrators can be of any gender. Research shows the majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by men against women, but it is acknowledged that sexual violence also occurs by women against men and in same sex and non-binary relationships. It can affect anyone regardless of age, class, ethnicity, ability or sexuality.

In addition to domestic abuse and sexual violence, **gender-based violence** can be experienced in **cultural or honour-based acts**, such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Stalking, trafficking and other similar forms of exploitation can also be classed as gender-based violence when the violence or threats of violence/harassment arise directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation. Honour-based violence is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the so-called honour of a family, community or social group to protect perceived cultural or religious beliefs or honour. Although defined as domestic abuse, these acts may be carried out by people who are not partners or family members.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees – If you wish to make a disclosure, as a victim or perpetrator, you should speak to your line manager or Human Resources Advisor. Please see [Guidance Notes 1](#) and [2](#) respectively.

All employees are required to adhere to the principles of this policy and to seek assistance or clarification from their line manager, where necessary. If you have any concerns relating to a colleague, either as a victim, survivor or perpetrator, please refer to [Guidance Note 4](#). Feedback is welcomed from all members of staff on the implementation of this policy and to highlight any aspects which require review or amendment. Please contact your HR Advisor.

Managers – Managers should endeavour to support those experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence in an empathetic, non-judgemental and confidential manner and ensure the consistent application of this policy within their own service area. Please refer to [Guidance Note 3](#).

Human Resources – Human Resources, with support from Community Safety and Safeguarding Teams, is responsible for the development and review of this policy in line with legislation and best practice. Human Resources will provide advice and guidance on the application of this policy and any associated policies and procedures.

Social Work, Safeguarding and Community Safety Teams – In the event that an employee is referred to one of these teams either as a victim or as a perpetrator of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence, the relevant professional should bring this policy to their attention.

Directors and Heads of Service - The responsibility for implementing the requirements of this policy and for the preparation of an implementation strategy rests with each Service Director and Head of Service in line with prevailing legislation and National Training Frameworks applicable to their service areas.

DISCLOSURE

There are separate guidance notes appended to this policy to assist you in making or handling disclosures of domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence and in dealing with perpetrators, where both the victim and perpetrator work for the Council. Disclosures must be treated with confidentiality and respect.

HOW DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IMPACTS ON WORK

People experiencing domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence may feel frightened, stigmatised, angry, tearful, suicidal, or disempowered. They often do not want to admit or share their experience because they feel some responsibility for the situation, or they may feel shame, or that they should be able to deal with the situation on their own. There can also be fears that they will not be believed, their experiences will be trivialised, they will cause trouble for the perpetrator, or that there might be a negative outcome for their children.

Identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage can help ensure that appropriate support is provided and help the employee to deal with their situation more effectively. This can reduce repeated work absences and can ultimately reduce the extent of the domestic abuse experienced.

Some feelings may come up months or years later or something happens that 'triggers' or reminds the individual of the abuse. The Council encourages staff to seek support through external agencies or internal services however they are feeling. We expect managers, HR, and Occupational Health and Wellbeing Services, to treat staff with dignity and in strictest confidence when advice or support is needed and when an incident is reported.

Not all abuse happens at home and individuals can be targeted while in work through threatening phone calls and emails, physical assaults and unannounced visits.

Work is also a place where survivors can physically create a distance from their perpetrator and seek help.

Managers should pay particular attention to those employees who work remotely or from home. Managers should maintain regular contact and find a way to communicate safely, agree a code word or hand signal as an alert for someone to use if they are suffering abuse, or arrange another place where they can work.

Domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence is not a one-off incident, but an ongoing pattern of behaviour in a relationship. This behaviour once begun, repeats and often gets worse over time having a particularly damaging effect on the survivor and their children.

If you require this Policy in an alternative format, please contact People Management by email at CHR@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

This Policy is also available in Welsh.

GUIDANCE NOTE 1 – VICTIM/SURVIVOR

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM/SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to ensuring that anyone disclosing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence will be listened to and supported.

If you disclose domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence to your manager, you can expect a sensitive and non-judgmental response and be able to discuss how the Council can support you. If you prefer, you can ask to speak to someone of your own sex or ethnicity so they can assist you in raising the issues which need to be addressed to help support you during this period.

It is appreciated that it is hard for anyone to report domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. It is recognised that there may be specific difficulties if you are LGBTQ+. This policy is inclusive of all our employees and is there to support you.

Remember

- **it is not your fault**
- **you will be listened to**
- **there is practical help and support available.**

As an employee you can expect the Council to support you to identify and access confidential help and support if you wish.

We understand how difficult it is to report domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence and will work with you to prevent further harm against you or your children. We also recognise that becoming free from abuse is a process that can take a long time, and will not judge any decisions made by you, but will provide on-going non-judgmental support and practical help.

Sources of other support from specialist agencies available in Carmarthenshire are listed in [Appendix A](#).

CONFIDENTIALITY

If you disclose that you are experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, you can expect that any information you provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without your permission.

In circumstances where there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, confidentiality cannot be assured. However, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously.

YOUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Whilst Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to creating a workplace environment that enables you to disclose domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, it also respects your right to privacy and will not force you to share this information if you do not want to.

SAFETY PLANNING

If you disclose domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, you can expect that your safety will be prioritised. Steps will be taken to minimise risks in the workplace, and you should be included in these decisions where possible in conjunction with your line manager. Steps might include arranging another place where you can work (particularly if you work from home) or [flexibility](#) around your working pattern/hours.

If you work at home, your manager can find ways to communicate safely with you by text messaging if calls are not possible, or by agreeing a code word or hand signal to use to alert others you are experiencing domestic abuse.

SAFE LEAVE AND TIME AWAY FROM WORK

When a disclosure is made, you might need time off to deal with a range of issues such as counselling, visits to support agencies, GP, police, solicitor, childcare, housing etc. You should feel able to discuss reasonable time off with your manager who can authorise paid '[Safe Leave](#)' of up to 10 days.

Other paid or unpaid time off may be considered as appropriate in line with the Council's [time off](#) and leave policies, e.g., where abuse impacts on your children you may need to be granted emergency carer leave in line with the Time Off for Dependants policy. Temporary flexible working arrangements may also be an option.

Unpaid leave will be considered after paid leave options have been exhausted.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If you are being denied access to your finances by an abusive partner, your manager can consider changes in your pay arrangements. This could be particularly important if you are planning on leaving your partner. Options available include:

- preventing a salary from going to the nominated bank account up to 48 hours prior to payday. Pay can be held until a new account is nominated;
- arranging for the you to be paid by cheque until a new account has been nominated.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO COUNSELLING

The Council can also provide confidential counselling and support to you via the Occupational Health Unit. Please refer to [Appendix A](#).

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DISCLOSURE SCHEME (ALSO KNOWN AS CLARE'S LAW)

Under this scheme you can ask the police to check whether a new, former or existing partner has a violent past. This is called 'right to ask'. If records show that you may be at risk of domestic abuse from a partner, the police will consider disclosing the information. A disclosure can be made if it is legal, proportionate and necessary to do so.

The 'right to ask' also allows a third party, such as a friend or family member, to apply for a disclosure on behalf of someone they know. Again, the police can release information if it is lawful, necessary, and proportionate to do so.

To make an application under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme contact the police on their non-emergency number 101.

IF YOU AND THE PERPETRATOR BOTH WORK FOR THE COUNCIL

In cases where both you and the perpetrator are employees of Carmarthenshire County Council, appropriate action will be taken. Your safety will always be prioritised over that of the perpetrator and action will be taken to minimise risks. Whenever possible, steps will be taken to ensure you and the perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position, or work resources, to find out details about your whereabouts. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain systems and working environments.

IN AN EMERGENCY JUST LEAVE

ALWAYS PUT YOUR OWN SAFETY FIRST – YOU CAN ALWAYS GET POSSESSIONS AND DOCUMENTS AT ANOTHER TIME

If you are not ready to leave -

- Tell someone nearby you trust about the abuse. They can call the police in case of an emergency.
- Agree a code word you can use with police or other services. In an emergency call 999.
- Practice ways to get out of your home quickly and safely.
- Find somewhere you can quickly and easily use a telephone or mobile – at work, a neighbour, a relative.
- Carry with you a list of telephone numbers of friends, relatives and emergency numbers in case you are unable to access your mobile phone.
- Keep your mobile phone charged and topped up, just in case you decide to leave.
- Keep the items you will need and some clothes ready to pack into a small bag. Keep these where you can quickly retrieve and pack them.
- Try to save some money for bus or taxi fares, if needed.
- Keep an extra set of keys for your home or car with someone you trust in case you need to leave immediately.
- Photocopy or know where important documents are (see the Leaving Home Checklist overleaf).
- Open a savings account in your own name to establish your independence.
- Decide who you could stay with, if the need arises.

If you are considering leaving home, please refer to the Checklist overleaf.

LEAVING HOME CHECKLIST

Below is a list of the items that would be useful to take with you if you decide to leave –

- Medication for you and any children
- Credit and Debit cards
- Mobile phone and charger
- Keys
- Benefit book(s)
- Birth Certificates (your own and any children)
- National Insurance Number
- Passport(s)
- Driving Licence
- Car documents (insurance, MOT, registration/log book)
- Originals or copies of
 - Marriage/Civil Partnership Certificate
 - Divorce papers
 - Insurance documents
 - Utility and phone account details
 - Rent book
- Address Book
- Diary
- Change of clothes
- Toys
- Jewellery/sentimental items
- Snacks

GUIDANCE NOTE 2 – PERPETRATOR

IF YOU ARE A PERPETRATOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence perpetrated by employees of Carmarthenshire County Council will not be condoned under any circumstances.

You should be made aware that domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence is a serious matter which could lead to a criminal conviction. The Council requires perpetrators of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence to declare any related prosecutions.

Proven harassment and intimidation of another employee of the Council by you as the individual's partner, ex-partner or relative, while you are also working for the Council, will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Conduct outside work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) may lead to disciplinary action against you if you are a perpetrator of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. There will be an investigation into the facts as far as possible, a view taken, and consideration given as to whether your conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action on a case by case basis. Reference should be made to the Council's [Disciplinary Policy](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) which sets out the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of employees at all times.

Factors to consider include:

- the nature of the conduct;
- the nature and type of work you do;
- the extent to which it involves contact with other employees, service users, children and vulnerable adults; and
- your status as an employee.

In addition, such conduct may make certain job duties inappropriate and justify dismissal or redeployment. It will not be appropriate for you, as a perpetrator of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, to be providing services to children or vulnerable adults. Disciplinary action could result in you being dismissed or justify a change in duties or redeployment in line with the Council's [Redeployment Policy](#).

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

If you are concerned about your abusive behaviour you can disclose your concerns in confidence either to your line manager, the Council's Occupational Health Unit or to local or national specialist support agencies listed in [Appendix A](#).

There is help and support available to you and the Council will support you in accessing these services if you want to.

IF YOU AND THE VICTIM/SURVIVOR BOTH WORK FOR THE COUNCIL

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator are employees of Carmarthenshire County Council, appropriate action will be taken. The safety of the victim will always be prioritised, and action should be taken to minimise risks. Disciplinary action may be considered against you, as the individual perpetrating abuse. Action may also be taken to minimise the potential for you, as the perpetrator to use your position or the Council's resources to further abuse or to locate the victim. Any decisions about maintaining safety should be taken in partnership with the victim/survivor.

Couple counselling or mediation is never a recommended course of action where domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence is present.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If you disclose that you are a perpetrator of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence you can expect that where possible any information you provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without your permission.

In circumstances where there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, confidentiality cannot be assured. However, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO COUNSELLING

The Council can also provide confidential counselling and support to you via the Occupational Health Unit. Please refer to [Appendix A](#).

GUIDANCE NOTE 3 – MANAGERS

IF YOU ARE A MANAGER OF A VICTIM, SURVIVOR OR PERPETRATOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, OR DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence is a complex and sensitive issue where people's safety and wellbeing can be at significant risk. Managers should be mindful of this throughout and take specialist advice when necessary.

Domestic abuse, or domestic or sexual violence is often perceived as a private matter rather than a workplace issue. As a manager you may be reluctant to raise the issue with an employee for a range of reasons including not knowing how to respond. Research shows that victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence overwhelmingly welcome workplace support and that this can make a real difference to their lives.

As a manager you do not need to be an expert, but you should be aware of the Council's commitment and policy and be able to:

- **Recognise** the problem (look for signs and ask)
- **Respond** appropriately
- **Refer** on to appropriate help
- **Record** the details

RECOGNISE

Employees who experience domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence may not tell people at work about their situation. It is more likely that you will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as absences or poor performance. The following are signs that an employee could be experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. They may also be indicative of other concerns.

Work productivity signs

Persistently late without explanation or with unusual explanation, or needing to leave work early;

High absenteeism without explanation or with unusual explanation;

Changes in quality of work performance for unexplained reasons;

Increased time being spent at work for no apparent reason i.e., arriving early and leaving late;

Upset at work due to receipt of upsetting emails, texts, phone calls, mail, social media messages or any other form of communication;

Vulnerability to stress at work which impacts on performance/attendance.

Psychological signs

May cry or be anxious at work;

Uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction, problems with concentrating;

Changes in behaviour; may become quiet and withdrawn and avoid interacting with colleagues;

Fear of partner/references to anger;

Expresses fear at leaving children home alone with partner.

Physical signs

Repeated injuries such as bruises; explanations for injuries that seem implausible;
Frequent and/or sudden/unexpected medical problems/sickness absence;
Fatigue;
Change in the way an employee dresses e.g., excessive clothing in summer;
Unkempt or dishevelled appearance;
Change in the pattern or amount of makeup worn.

Other Signs

Receives constant phone calls from partner/ex-partner;
Partner meets employee outside work regularly;
Employee appears anxious about leaving the premises;
Employee appears anxious about leaving work on time;
Employee appears reluctant to leave work alone;
Employee fails to attend or avoids work events, such as training, away days or social activities.

WHAT ACTION SHOULD YOU TAKE WHEN AN EMPLOYEE DISCLOSES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE, OR DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

If an employee discloses to you, they are experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence it is very important they are believed – do not ask for proof. Avoid passing judgement on the perpetrator's behaviour or the victim's response. It is important to understand that leaving an abusive relationship or dealing with the consequences of sexual violence is a very difficult thing to do.

You need to ensure a sensitive and non-judgemental approach when supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. The guidance at [Appendix B](#) provides examples of indirect and direct questions that you can use to explore the issues further with an individual.

Where possible, you should always support a victim on their own terms and advise them on accessing the Council's [wellbeing/counselling services](#), [time-off](#) etc policies, the list of external agencies appended to this policy and involving the police. If a member of staff does not wish you to refer them, or give you their consent to contact other agencies, their wishes must be paramount.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE/ATTENDANCE

You should be aware of the possibility of domestic abuse and sexual violence when implementing the [Sickness Absence Policy and procedures](#). If you suspect domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence could be the cause of absence, then try and create a supportive environment in which the employee is able to disclose the abuse if they wish to do so. You should consider whether it is appropriate to issue sickness absence warnings where the known cause is domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence and seek advice from a HR Advisor.

Similarly, in reviewing performance through the Council's adopted [appraisal process](#) and before applying the [Capability Policy](#) and procedures you should consider the possibility of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence being a factor in under performance.

The focus should be on supporting rather than penalising or putting additional pressure on employees affected. Managers should be sympathetic when dealing with distracted behaviour, poor timekeeping and unplanned absence that may result from the abuse of an employee.

PREGNANCY/MATERNITY

Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, but in relationships where this already exists, the abuse and violence can get worse. Where you suspect or are aware of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, this should be taken into account as part of the pregnancy risk assessment and appropriate safeguards considered, utilising the [New and Expectant Mothers risk assessment](#) located on the Health & Safety pages of the intranet.

You should also explore 'Keeping in Touch' days during maternity leave and agree a safe mechanism for maintaining workplace communication during maternity leave. Information on [KIT days and the Maternity Pack](#) can be found in the HR pages on the intranet.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

There are a number of things you can do to create a safe environment for an employee to disclose domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence and feel that they will be supported if they do. Employees will feel more able to disclose if they know you understand and are empathetic in your approach to issues of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence.

Discussing this policy at team meetings, displaying posters and leaflets in your work area can help to demonstrate this.

ASK THE QUESTION

As a manager you may suspect that there is a problem but are afraid to ask. Research shows that victims of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence wished someone had asked them about it. If you suspect an employee may be being abused, raise the issue with them in a private location in a sensitive, non-confrontational manner. If appropriate, offer the option of speaking to another manager of the same sex or ethnicity as the employee suffering domestic abuse or violence.

Further guidance on how to ask an employee about domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence can be found in [Appendix B](#).

RESPOND

If you are aware that someone is in immediate danger, you should call the appropriate emergency service on 999.

Otherwise remember it is not your responsibility as the manager to stop the abuse or help an employee escape from an abusive relationship. The most effective way you can support an employee is to signpost to the appropriate agencies in Carmarthenshire who have the expertise to assist and provide on-going specialist support. Please refer to [Appendix A](#).

HEALTH & SAFETY

Under Health and Safety at Work legislation and the Council's [Health and Safety Policy](#), as a manager and employee, you have a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other employees at work. You are also required to assess the risk of violence to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety.

Once you are made aware of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence you should encourage the employee to contact a specialist agency who will be able to carry out a specific domestic abuse risk assessment as well as providing practical and emotional support.

You must also discuss with the employee their safety at work and ensure that the potential risk to the employee and work colleagues is minimised. If there is a potential risk to other employees' you should seek advice in carrying out a [risk assessment](#) and taking action to minimise the risks in the workplace. (See suggested measures below.)

If an incident occurs at work, make sure it is recorded and follow it up under the Council's [Personal Safety](#) Register and Toolkit.

Although this guidance will apply to most situations of violence in the workplace, managers may have to consider additional factors if these incidents involve domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. These incidents may involve violent partners, ex-partners or relatives visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation or harassment of staff by the alleged perpetrator.

These issues can be addressed utilising the following measures as appropriate:

- improving security measures such as changing keypad numbers or ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised staff only;
- reminding reception/switchboard staff not to divulge information about staff, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns;
- changing the employee's work telephone number and removing their name and number from the telephone directory so employees cannot inadvertently give out the employee's phone number;
- establish an emergency contact person with the employee in case you cannot contact them;
- review the employee's next of kin information with the employee to ensure they have an opportunity to nominate an alternative next of kin if the perpetrator is listed;
- setting up a firewall to block or divert emails from the perpetrator to a separate folder. Ensure emails are retained, to be used as evidence if needed;
- offering temporary or permanent changes in the workplace, work times and patterns in line with the Council's [Flexible Working Policy](#), helping to make the employee less at risk at work, and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the office layout, to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception point or, from ground floor windows;

- offering changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in reception or in exceptional circumstances, temporary or permanent redeployment to another post in line with the Council's [Redeployment Policy](#);
- agreeing with the individual what to tell staff, and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Providing colleagues with a photograph of the abuser, and other relevant details such as car registration numbers, which may help to maintain security in the workplace;
- making sure that the systems for recording staff whereabouts during the day are adequate. If the work requires visits outside the office, considering how risks can be minimised, e.g., changing duties or allowing another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys;
- recording any incidents of violence in the workplace by the perpetrator, including persistent phone calls, emails or visits to a member of staff by their partner/ex-partner or relative. Details of any witnesses should also be recorded. These records could be used if staff wish to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator. The Council could also apply for an injunction if the actions of the alleged perpetrator impinges on the health and safety of other members of staff;
- managers may have to take account of whether the measures detailed above are operationally feasible, bearing in mind that ensuring staff are safe should be of primary consideration throughout the process.

Importantly, stay in regular contact with the employee.

Staff experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence may be more vulnerable to stress at work and reference should be made to the Council's [Stress Management Policy and toolkit](#).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Once a member of staff has confided in you as their manager, they are experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, you should reassure them that this information will remain confidential unless they give specific consent for you to discuss this with another person. The consequences of breaching confidentiality could have serious effects for the person experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. Statistics show the risk of more serious assault, permanent injury, and even murder, take place when a victim decides to leave home, or immediately after. It is vitally important not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of violence is exaggerated.

With the express consent of the individual concerned, i.e., agreement on what information you can share with colleagues, you must ensure these other employees are fully aware of any risks. Employees who are privy to such information should be reminded that the information is confidential, any unauthorised breaches by them could lead to the Council's Disciplinary Procedures being invoked.

Information about domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence should only be shared with other practitioners where this is necessary and where the employee has given permission. The only exceptions to this are:

- where child or vulnerable adult protection issues are raised, for instance, if an employee gives information that suggests that their child or another child or

vulnerable adult is at risk from 'significant harm' (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect). In these circumstances, you should inform the employee you need to seek further advice from the appropriate agency, e.g., Social Services Child Protection and/or Safeguarding Adults teams, and may have to pass on relevant information.

- where others, such as service users, customers or colleagues could be put at risk, the employee needs to be informed that information could be shared with others.

Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure files containing information about those experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence do not contain details of current addresses. Addresses may need to be held separately to ensure the abuser has no way of accessing them.

You should be aware that there may be employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, and that confidentiality is of paramount importance as both victim and perpetrator may be employees of the Council.

COLLEAGUES

Advise colleagues on a 'need to know' basis and with the employee's consent and agree a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace.

With the employee's consent share the perpetrator's photo and details of the perpetrator's car with colleagues and reception staff so that they can recognise the perpetrator.

Remind all staff never to divulge personal information about employees to callers (e.g., shift patterns, addresses, telephone numbers etc). Never tell the caller where the employee is and what time they will be back or tell the caller that the employee is on leave.

SAFE LEAVE AND TIME AWAY FROM WORK

The Council provides for up to 10 days paid 'Safe Leave' to staff who have disclosed they are experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence to allow them to attend to their needs. Managers should explore this and other time off options, such as dependent's leave, with the employee and view sympathetically all requests for paid or unpaid time off work in line with the Council's [Time Off Policy](#). Unpaid leave should be considered after paid leave options have been exhausted.

Requests for safe leave or time off could include:

- appointments with support services/agencies, social workers or counsellors
- arranging re-housing
- meetings with Solicitors or the police
- making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools
- court proceedings involving incidents of domestic or sexual violence.

You should advise the employee to apply for safe leave related to domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence as 'special leave' with pay, using the self-service facility on Resource Link. This can be authorised by you on-line confidentially using the appropriate security permissions.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If an employee is being denied access to their finances by a perpetrator you should consider changes in the employee's pay arrangements. This could be particularly important if the employee is planning on leaving the perpetrator.

Options available include:

- Preventing a salary from going to the nominated bank account up to 48 hours prior to payday. Pay can be held until a new account is nominated;
- Arranging for the employee to be paid by cheque until a new account has been nominated.

Any changes to salary payments should be arranged confidentially with payroll and you should ensure that payment can be made on the appropriate date before confirming this with the employee.

Trades Unions may be able to offer loans to their members; it is worth discussing this with the employee and their union representative.

REFER

PROVIDE INFORMATION

You should provide information on sources of support and specialist services available to employees affected by domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. A full list is available at [Appendix A](#).

PROVIDING ACCESS TO COUNSELLING

The Council can also provide confidential counselling and support to staff experiencing domestic abuse and/or sexual violence and you can make a [referral](#) to the Occupational Health Unit and also sign post to external specialist agencies. Please refer to [Appendix A](#).

RECORD

It is important to record concerns or disclosures of domestic abuse and sexual violence and the actions you have taken, accurately and confidentially. You should also keep an accurate record of incidents at work, including persistent phone calls, emails and visits.

DEALING WITH SUSPECTED PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As a manager you are not expected to attempt to identify perpetrators of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence. However, if you have concerns about an employee's behaviour, although they do not always imply that an individual is a perpetrator, the following signs may be an indicator:

- Uncharacteristic lateness or absence with no explanation;
- Repeated injuries/scratches/bite marks/bruised knuckles/injuries to wrists/forearms;

- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner;
- Jealousy or possessiveness;
- Negative comments about the employee's partner or the gender/sexual orientation of their partner in more general terms

If an individual presents a problem such as drinking, stress or depression, this could also signify that they are perpetrating domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence.

If an employee reveals that they are a perpetrator of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence, remember to **Record** and **Refer**.

If you are made aware of concerns that an employee may be perpetrating domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence by another employee, it is important that you do not take any actions that may lead to repercussions for the victim or yourself. You are advised to seek advice from HR in these circumstances.

Please remember, unless you are a trained and qualified specialist or counsellor, you should not assume those roles or try to solve the individual's problems.

GUIDANCE NOTE 4 – WORK COLLEAGUES

IF YOU ARE A WORK COLLEAGUE OF A VICTIM/SURVIVOR, OR A PERPETRATOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

If you think a work colleague is suffering abuse, you can help.

The stress of living in an abusive relationship is likely to impact on an individual's capacity to perform to the best of their ability at work, and it is unlikely that they would be free from the abusive behaviour while at work.

As a work colleague you are in a good position to be able to identify changes in behaviour, dress, or appearance that may indicate domestic abuse.

YOUR ROLE AS A WORK COLLEAGUE

You are encouraged to respond appropriately if you suspect that a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Let them know you have noticed something is wrong. Individuals may not want to discuss the abuse, but your concerns should be raised in confidence with your manager. Some victims of domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence will feel unable to accept help, which can be frustrating. Offer support where possible, but do not force an individual to disclose abuse, or to follow a course of action they are uncomfortable with. Let them know they can get emotional support for themselves and any children they may have.

[Appendix A](#) lists sources of support available in Carmarthenshire and where possible you should discuss seeking support with your colleague.

If you do feel able to raise the issue with your colleague, [Appendix B](#) offers examples of how to ask the question.

It is not your responsibility to stop the abuse, but you can play an important role by highlighting your concerns. You should –

- believe what they tell you and show you care;
- not expect them to make a sudden decision;
- help them to explore the choices they have;
- not mediate or be the contact person between them and the abuser;
- assure them they are not alone and there is help available;
- encourage them to speak to [a specialist support service](#);
- offer practical help, such as the use of your address for post, telephone or computer;
- encourage them to take all threats seriously and report the abuse, and
- never minimise the threats made by the abuser.

If you believe a child is suffering you should report your concerns to your line manager so the right support can be offered. If there is a risk of harm or you believe the child is in immediate danger, you should contact children's services/the police straight away.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any concerns about a colleague in work should be raised in confidence with your manager and where possible, with the permission of the individual.

Never divulge personal information about work colleagues to others, including other employees, without their permission. Remember that a perpetrator may contact a victim's workplace in order to gain information about them, or to learn about their whereabouts.

You should not answer enquiries from members of the public about colleagues' working arrangements, such as their hours of work or shift pattern. Never tell the caller where the employee is and what time they will be back or tell the caller that the employee is on leave.

SUPPORT

Witnessing a work colleague experiencing domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence can be traumatic, and you may feel powerless or unable to help. Remember that you can seek support in confidence from your line manager, the Council's Occupational Health Unit or from the local or national helplines listed in [Appendix A](#) (you do not have to be a victim yourself to contact them).

Unless you are a trained and qualified specialist or counsellor, you should not assume those roles or try to solve the individual's problems.

If you feel burdened by additional work that a colleague experiencing abuse is unable to complete, remember that you can raise this issue with your line manager.

APPENDIX A - SUPPORT AGENCIES

IN AN EMERGENCY DO NOT DELAY DIAL 999

CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES

Occupational Health & Wellbeing Team

Tel: 01267 246060/246061

E-mail: CEOccupationalHealth@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

A confidential service providing access to Occupational Health Advisors, Nurses, Practitioners and Stress Management Practitioners

Housing and council tax benefits

If you need further information or advice please go to www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk and click on 'Advice and Benefits'

E-mail: housing.benefits@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Freephone: 0800 288 9002

Housing advice

If you are a home owner, a private tenant or a Council or Housing Association tenant, if you need information on - Housing advice, Housing options and Home improvement: www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/english/housing/pages/home.aspx

Tel: 01554 742194

Tel (out of hours): 01267 234567

Email: Housing@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Text us on: 07766 406506

Minicom service: 01267 223867

EXTERNAL SERVICES

Mid and West Wales Domestic Abuse, or Domestic or Sexual Violence Regional Pathway to Support

This service sets out a clear pathway to domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence support and advice for citizens and professionals living and working within the Mid and West Wales region.

The **Live Fear Free Helpline on 0808 8010800** is open to individuals experiencing any form of Domestic Abuse or Sexual violence (DA/SV). [Live Fear-Free](#)

The **Live Fear Free Helpline** will provide immediate advice and guidance before signposting to a local Specialist Support Provider (see table overleaf).

LOCAL AUTHORITY	PROVIDER(S) AND PROGRAMMES	SPECIALISM	CONTACT NUMBER	COVERED BY LIVE FEAR FREE HELPLINE
SURVIVOR AND VICTIM FOCUSED SERVICES				
Regional Service	Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service (IDVA), Hafan Cymru and Pobl	High Risk Domestic Abuse	Carmarthenshire and Powys 01267 221194 Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion 01646 698820	Yes
<p>IDVA - a small team of Independent domestic violence advisors/advocates that support victims/survivors and their family who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse and have been assessed as high risk of serious harm and homicide.</p> <p>Hafan Cymru - offers a variety of accommodation and support services for vulnerable adults, young people and children www.hafancymru.co.uk</p> <p>Pobl – emergency accommodation, advice and support www.poblgroup.co.uk/about-us/pobl-story/april/here-for-domestic-abuse-victims/</p>				
Regional Service	New Pathways	Sexual Violence	Ceredigion 01970 610124 Carmarthenshire 01267 235464 Powys 01267 226166 Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) - Out of Hours (all areas) 07423 437020	Yes
<p>New Pathways - offers help and support for victims of rape or sexual assault (immediate or historic) www.newpathways.co.uk</p>				

National Service	Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO)	Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (domestic abuse, domestic or sexual violence) Black and Minority Ethnic Women (BAME)	0800 731 8147 (24 hr helpline)	
	BAWSO - a specialist agency, providing culturally sensitive and appropriate information and services to black and other minority ethnic women and children. It can provide access to refuge, advice, information and translation services via a 24 hour helpline. www.bawso.org.uk			
Powys	Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre	Domestic Abuse	01686 629114 www.familycrisis.co.uk	Yes
	Calan DVS	Domestic Abuse	01874 625146 www.calandvs.org.uk	Yes
Ceredigion	West Wales Domestic Abuse Service	Domestic Abuse	01970 625585 and/or 01239 615385	Yes
Carmarthenshire	Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Service	Domestic Abuse	01267 238410/234725 www.carmdas.org	Yes
	Threshold Domestic Abuse Service	Domestic Abuse	01554 752422 www.threshold-das.org.uk	Yes
	Calan DVS	Domestic Abuse	01269 597474 www.calandvs.org.uk	Yes
	Dewis Choice	Domestic Abuse for people aged 60+	Referral via statutory agency e.g., safeguarding, police, health dewischoice.org.uk	No
Pembrokeshire	Pobl	Domestic Abuse	01646 698820 www.poblgroup.co.uk	Yes
	Hafan Cymru	Domestic Abuse - Refuge only	0808 80 10 800 www.hafancymru.co.uk	Yes

INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT INDIVIDUALS PERPETRATING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS

Regional Services	Threshold Domestic Abuse Service: Choices Programme	Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse	enquiries@threshold-das.org.uk 01554 752422	No
	Calan DVS Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre's Intervention Hub	Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse	gbranch@calandvs.org.uk 01639 794448 admin@familycrisis.co.uk 01686 629114	No
	Forensic Psychology UK Threshold Domestic Abuse Service	Individuals displaying stalking behaviours	Service accessed via Dyfed Powys Police Tel: 101 www.dyfed-powys.police.uk	No

OTHER REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES OUTSIDE THE MID AND WEST WALES DOMESTIC ABUSE, OR DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE REGIONAL PATHWAY LISTED ABOVE

Police – Domestic Abuse Officers, Public Protection Unit

www.dyfed-powys.police.uk

Tel: 101

Domestic abuse officers can offer help and advice to victims who need police assistance of a non-urgent nature.

Dyn Safer Wales

www.dynwales.org

Tel: 0808 81 0321

Working across Wales to support men who experience domestic abuse.

Bright Sky App

Bright Sky is a **free to download mobile app** providing support and information for anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.

Broken Rainbow

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Tel: 08452 60 44 60

Broken Rainbow provides support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people experiencing domestic abuse.

Wales Citizen's Advice Bureau

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Tel: 0800 702 2020

Text Relay UK if you cannot hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: 118001 then 0800 144 8884

You can use Relay UK with an app or a textphone. There's no extra charge to use it. [Find out how to use Relay UK](#)

The Citizens Advice Bureau Service offers free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on a range of issues including debt, benefits, housing and legal matters. Advisers can help fill out forms, write letters, negotiate with creditors and represent individuals at court.

Hourglass

www.wearehourglass.org

Tel: 0808 808 8141

The Hourglass confidential helpline provides information and support to anyone concerned about harm, abuse or exploitation of an older person.

Karma Nirvana

www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Tel: 0800 5999 247

Karma Nirvana is an honour network and forced marriage helpline.

Respect Men's Advice Line

www.mensadvice.org.uk

Tel: 0808 801 0327

Confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse.

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

www.galop.org.uk

Tel: 0800 999 5428

Emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people.

National Stalking Helpline

Tel: 0808 802 0300

Guidance on the law, how to report stalking, gathering evidence, staying safe and reducing the risk.

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 5000

24hr helpline offering counselling, information and advice to anyone that is concerned about a child. All counsellors are trained child protection officers.

Relate Cymru

www.relate.org.uk/cymru/help-domestic-violence

Relationship guidance including help for domestic violence.

Victim Support

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Tel: 0300 123 2996 (Local Helpline)

Tel: 0808 1689 111 (National Helpline)

A national charity giving free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family, friends and anyone else affected across England and Wales. This is not a government agency or part of the police and individuals do not have to report a crime to the police to get help and can call any time after the crime has happened, whether it was yesterday, last week or several years ago.

APPENDIX B

ASKING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

The advice below is taken from the CIPD/EHRC publication *Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse: a guide for employers* (September 2020).

Carmarthenshire Council will support employees to take basic steps to assist friends and colleagues where they feel able to do so. By behaving in a supportive and empathetic manner, an employee can assist an affected colleague in gaining confidence to tackle and report the problems that they might experience.

Research shows that 75% of those enduring domestic abuse are targeted at work. Domestic abuse is often a hidden problem and individuals can find it very difficult to disclose. Some individuals may not recognise they are in an abusive relationship, especially if the abuse is not physical.

If a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a conversation to be able to discuss this and identify and implement appropriate support. Shying away from the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety. However, if the employee is working remotely from home please exercise extreme caution since the abuser could be monitoring the victim overtly or covertly. If possible and safe to do so, arrange to meet the employee in one of the Council's buildings where the abuser has no access and you can hold a private and confidential discussion.

Managers should ask the employee indirect questions, to help establish a relationship with the employee and develop empathy. Often employees will not feel confident in speaking up, so someone else making the first move to begin a conversation can be key.

Here are some examples of questions that could be used but use your judgement and be sensitive to the particular circumstances before opening the conversation –

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Are there any issues you'd like to discuss with me?
- I have noticed recently that you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?
- Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence/underperformance at work?
- Is everything alright at home?
- What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

Avoid victim-blaming. It is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential.

Respect an employee's decisions about their relationship and understand that a victim of domestic abuse may make a number of attempts to leave their partner before they are finally able to do so. It's important that managers are aware of the effects of coercive control.

Your role as a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to address the workplace effects of domestic abuse by making it clear to employees that they will be supported, making them aware of the workplace policy, outlining what help is available, and signposting them to professional sources of support.

Where it appears an employee is displaying signs of physical assault or injury, the manager should ask **direct questions** to prompt the employee to discuss any possible experiences of domestic abuse.

The following question must be asked with great sensitivity and care –

- “I am sorry to ask you this and I don’t wish to cause you any offence, but I notice that you have a number of bruises/cuts/burns etc. Can you tell me how you got your injuries?”

Once it has been established that there maybe or is a problem related to domestic abuse, it might be useful to ask the employee the following direct questions –

- Have you ever been slapped/kicked/punched etc, by your partner?
- Do you feel frightened of your partner or someone else at home?
- Are you currently in a relationship where you are experiencing abuse?
- Does your partner lose their temper with you? If so what happens to you as a result?
- Has your partner threatened to hurt you or your children?
- Does your partner get jealous of you seeing friends, talking to other people, going out? If so what happens?
- Does your partner blame alcohol or drugs for the behaviour towards you?

Whether you are a manager or work colleague you can offer support when a disclosure is made –

Listen – try to understand and take care not to apportion blame.

Tell – them they are not alone and you can help.

Acknowledge – it takes strength to trust someone enough to talk to them about experiencing abuse. It is a frightening and very difficult situation to experience.

Time – allow time for the victim to talk, but do not push them into too much detail.

Reassure – that no one deserves to be threatened or beaten, despite what the abuser has told them. Nothing they can do or say can justify the abuser’s behaviour.