



Employee Domestic Abuse Policy

This Employee Domestic Abuse Policy should be read in conjunction with the Corporate Domestic Abuse Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rutland County Council recognises that its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse; for example, as a survivor of domestic abuse, an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse, someone who has been impacted upon by domestic abuse or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse.
- 1.2 We have a 'zero tolerance' position on domestic abuse and are 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 appropriate support and assistance.
- 1.3 This policy should be read alongside the Domestic Abuse Strategy which also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse, acknowledging that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator.

2. Aim

Our aim is to:

- 2.1 Send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.
- 2.2 Respect employees right to privacy whilst strongly encouraging victims of domestic abuse to disclose this to their manager to promote not only their safety but also others within the workplace.
- 2.3 Encourage all members of staff to be aware of the signs of domestic abuse. Whilst acknowledging it is for the victims themselves to recognise if they are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 2.4 Ensure when a staff member discloses they are experiencing domestic abuse this will be addressed positively and sympathetically, and providing appropriate support and assistance.

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 This Strategy and Policy applies to all staff who are employed by Rutland County Council whether directly (fixed term or permanent) or indirectly (through an agency).

4. Signs of Domestic Abuse

- 4.1 It is important to remember that individuals of any gender can be victims of domestic abuse and domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of their social, educational and financial status. It is also essential to be aware that any of the below may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one.
- 4.2 **Physical Abuse** - If someone is being physically abused, they will likely have frequent bruises or physical injuries consistent with being punched, choked, or knocked down and will likely have a weak or inconsistent explanation for these injuries that may include black eye, bruise to arms, cut lip, marks on the neck and, or sprained wrists.
- 4.3 **Emotional Abuse** - Domestic abuse can take a significant emotional toll, creating a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, or despair. Victims may believe that they will never escape the control of the abuser. They may exhibit a constant state of alertness to the point they never can completely relax that includes agitation, anxiety, apprehension, changes in sleep, dependency on substances, be extremely apologetic, lose interest in certain activities, have low self-esteem, seem fearful and, or be depressed.
- 4.4 **Coercion and Control** – Not all domestic abuse is violent abuse, some abusers use coercion and controlling behaviours. Signs of experiencing this type of abuse might be an employee who appears to always need to ask permission to meet or socialise with others, who receives constant calls or texts from their partner tracking where they are and who they are with, having little or no money available to them, not having access to a vehicle and, or, referring to their partner as being jealous or possessive.
- 4.5 Domestic abuse may bring about visible changes in an employee's behaviour. Someone who was previously outgoing might gradually become quiet and withdrawn. Signs to look out for might be an employee appearing more reserved or distant, isolating themselves from their work colleagues, family or friends, cancelling appointments at the last minute, exhibiting excessive privacy concerning their personal life or about the person with whom they are in a relationship, or often late or absent from work, or be identified due to a drop in performance.

5. Support

- 1.1 Developing a life free from abuse is a process and we will therefore provide support to employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse, working with both the employee and where required, their union representative and any specialist domestic abuse services to promote safety.
- 1.2 Support for employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse may include:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role.
- Redeployment or relocation (if possible).
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Using other existing policies, including flexible working.
- Access to counselling/support services in paid time.
- Access to courses developed to support survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme or assertiveness training.

5. Perpetrators of domestic abuse

- 5.1 Perpetrating domestic abuse will not be tolerated by any employee of the council and will not be treated as purely a private matter.
- 5.2 The council views violence or abusive behaviour as a breach of the council's Code of Conduct for disciplinary purposes.
- 5.3 Employees approaching the council for support as a perpetrator of abuse will be offered appropriate support.
- 5.4 Any employee who is responsible for giving advice, or who comes into contact with or supports those vulnerable people, or children/young people victims of domestic abuse, needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1 Employees disclosing that they are experiencing domestic abuse can be assured that any information they share will be treated in the strictest of confidence.
- 6.2 There may be circumstances where the council determines a need to breach this confidentiality, such as where domestic abuse could impact on the safety of other employees. In this event the council will take legal advice before disclosing information in relation to an employee and discuss with this the employee in question to reach a resolution. Any information provided will be on a 'need-to-know' basis.
- 6.3 Any personnel records relating to absence from work as a consequence of domestic abuse will be strictly confidential and not impact adversely on the employee's record of employment.
- 6.4 Rutland County Council's primary concern is the safety and wellbeing of its employees.

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