

# ***Domestic Violence Abuse Model Workplace Policy***

## **1 Introduction**

1. The purpose of this agreement is to support and help employees who are experiencing Domestic Violence /Abuse.
2. This agreement covers all employees, and [THE EMPLOYER] will additionally offer support to agency and contract staff as far as possible.
3. This agreement complements, but is not restricted by, other equal opportunities and flexible working agreements, including [LIST OF RELEVANT AGREEMENTS].
4. This agreement should be supported by a more detailed procedure drawn up by [THE EMPLOYER] for managers to use.

## **2 Principles**

1. [THE EMPLOYER] is committed to the principle that Domestic Violence/ Abuse is unacceptable behaviour and everyone has the right to live free from fear and abuse. One-in-four women have or will experience Domestic Violence/Abuse and Domestic Violence accounts for one third of all violent crime in N.Ireland.
2. [THE EMPLOYER] recognises the scope of Domestic Violence/Abuse and its responsibility for the well-being of staff and will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing Domestic Violence/ Abuse.
3. [THE EMPLOYER] is committed to working in partnership with other agencies/ bodies to ensure support is available for staff who are experiencing Domestic Violence/ Abuse
4. This agreement is part of [THE EMPLOYER]'s commitment to family friendly working, and seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance; and enhance the reputation of [THE EMPLOYER] as an employer of choice.

### **3 Definition of Domestic Violence/Abuse**

1. For the purposes of this policy, Domestic Violence/Abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. The DHSSPS Tackling Violence at Home Strategy 2005 defines Domestic Violence and Abuse as: “Threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.
2. Domestic Violence/Abuse is rarely a one off event and is usually frequent and persistent. It knows no boundaries as regards age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography, but in the majority of reported cases women are the victims. While the majority of victims are women men are also affected as are men and women in same sex relationships.
3. Domestic Violence/Abuse affects all members of a household. Given the vulnerability of children they are particularly susceptible to the impact of violence in the home. Children may be injured as a result of Domestic Violence and frequently witness violent events.

### **4 Impact on the Workplace**

1. [THE EMPLOYER} recognises that home and work issues cannot always be separated and that Domestic Violence and Abuse can impact greatly on the working life of employees and can result in:
  - A deterioration in employee performance
  - Increased and unexplained absenteeism
  - Poor timekeeping
  - Threat to job security and prospects
2. [THE EMPLOYER] recognises that people experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse are at increasing risk when they attempt to leave an abusive partner. They may become vulnerable going to and coming from work, or while they are at work as the perpetrator knows where they can be located. This can give rise to Health and Safety issues including the risk of violence occurring in the workplace.

## **5.0 Legislation**

1. [THE EMPLOYER] is aware of their duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the Health and Safety at work of employees.
2. [THE EMPLOYER] recognises its responsibility under the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations (NI) 1992 to assess the risks of violence to employees and make arrangements for their Health and Safety by effective planning, organisation and control.
3. [THE EMPLOYER] is aware of their responsibility under the Human Rights Act 1998 in particular;
  - Article 2 the right to life
  - Article 3 the right not to be tortured or inhumanely or degradingly treated or punished
  - Article 4 the right not to be required to perform forced labour
  - Article 8 the right to respect for ones private and family life, home and Correspondence
  - Article 5 the right to liberty and security of person.

## **6 General Measures**

1. [THE EMPLOYER] will inform all staff of the issue and what support is available using noticeboards, the intranet, staff briefings, inductions and other means. This includes internal support, and local and national external organisations like Women's Aid.
2. [THE EMPLOYER] will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.
3. Staff experiencing Domestic Violence/ Abuse may report it to a union representative, a line manager, or colleague. [THE EMPLOYER] will provide training for all managers on Domestic Violence/Abuse and appropriate responses. This will also be included in inductions for new managers. Line managers will not counsel victims, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.
4. A member of [HUMAN RESOURCES], trained in Domestic Violence and Abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff. This person will also provide guidance for line managers who are approached by staff who are experiencing Domestic Violence/ Abuse.

## **7 Role of Line Manager**

1. Where Domestic Violence/Abuse has been reported line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.
2. Line managers will offer employees experiencing Domestic Violence/Abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - 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 a perpetrator who may be a customer or a fellow employee.
  - Redeployment or relocation.
  - Offer financial support by way of an advance in pay.
  - Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
  - Diverting e mails to a separate folder.
  - Getting places on assertiveness training courses
  - Using other existing policies [including FLEXIBLE WORKING, OTHERS]
  - Paid leave to recover from stress/ psychological impact
3. Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the appropriate course of action at every stage.
4. Other existing provisions [including OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, COUNSELLING SERVICE, OTHERS] will also be available to staff as a means of help and support.

## **8 Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

1. All records concerning Domestic Violence /Abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to Domestic Violence /Abuse and there will be no adverse impact on employment records.
2. Information will only be disclosed with the express permission of the individual, unless there are legal requirements to the contrary (for example Domestic Violence and Abuse is frequently linked to child abuse, and where a risk to children or vulnerable adults is identified the employer's responsibility for public protection may lead them to notify social services. If this happens, the individual will be informed.

## **9 Perpetrators in the Workplace**

1. Managing perpetrators in the work place will require individual consideration and will depend on the following;
  - the employees role in the organisation, for example if their role involves working with children and vulnerable adults
  - the role of the organisation
  - the nature of the conviction

Organisations should take action in line with their organisational procedures and should consider legal advice where necessary.

2. Any employee who uses the time, property or resources of [THE EMPLOYER] to abuse a partner or family member will be dealt with under the [APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT POLICY]
3. If a victim and the alleged perpetrator are both employed by [THE EMPLOYER], any incidents at work will be dealt with under the [APPROPRIATE POLICY].
4. [THE EMPLOYER] will take action to minimise the potential for a perpetrator to use his position or resources at work to access details of his partner or ex partner.
5. [THE EMPLOYER] should grant time off work to attend perpetrator programmes

## Useful Resources /Support Services

1. **Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence, 2006,  
Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and  
Abuse: Guidance for Employers**

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dv-guidance-for-employers.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dv-guidance-for-employers.pdf)

2. **Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid**

[www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk)

3. **HSC Regional Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse in  
the Workplace, September 2010 (copy available on**

[www.belfastdvp.co.uk](http://www.belfastdvp.co.uk)

4. **Domestic Abuse - A Trade Union Guide ICTU issued by Irish  
Congress of Trade Unions Women's Committee, Nov 2009**

[www.ictu.ie/equality/gender/genderbasedviol.html](http://www.ictu.ie/equality/gender/genderbasedviol.html)

5. **Domestic Violence - A Trade Union Guide – NIPSA Nov 2011**

[www.nipsa.org.uk/Home/EqualOpportunities/Publications/Domestic-Violence-A-Trade-Union-Guide](http://www.nipsa.org.uk/Home/EqualOpportunities/Publications/Domestic-Violence-A-Trade-Union-Guide)

6. **Respect - Domestic Violence Resource Manual for  
Employers**

[www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html](http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html)