

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 In accordance with the Council's Wellbeing Agenda, the new Domestic Abuse Policy sets out the Council's commitment to provide a safe and supportive environment at work for those who are being affected by, or who are at risk from, domestic abuse or violence.

1.2 The Policy aims to:

- Clearly state that the Council believes everyone has the right to live free from domestic abuse and that domestic abuse is unacceptable.
- Emphasise that the Council is committed to supporting employees' health and wellbeing at work and recognises that domestic abuse affects people in all aspects of life, including the workplace.
- Create an environment at work where employees feel safe to disclose their experience of abuse in order to access support and increased safety for themselves and others.
- Respect the rights of employees not to disclose.

### **1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee approve the new Domestic Abuse Policy for onward transition to the Council.

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### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In February 2018, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act was passed, which initiated a review of the Council's position on Domestic Abuse and what support was available for its employees.
- 2.2 Following the implementation of the Wellbeing Agenda and the creation of a new Wellbeing Team, this review was finalised and the Domestic Abuse Policy was consulted on and completed. In developing the policy, it is noted that the particular circumstances of Covid-19 have resulted in an escalation of domestic abuse.
- 2.3 The policy is presented today to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and approval.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee approve the new Domestic Abuse Policy for onward transition to the Council.

### **4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1. The Domestic Abuse Policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing a safe and supportive working environment for those affected by domestic abuse. The policy document is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The aims of the policy are to:
  - Clearly state that the Council believes everyone has the right to live free from domestic abuse and that domestic abuse is unacceptable.
  - Emphasise that the Council is committed to supporting employees' health and wellbeing at work and recognises that domestic abuse affects people in all aspects of life, including the workplace.
  - Create an environment at work where employees feel safe to disclose their experience of abuse in order to access support and increased safety for themselves and others.

- Respect the right of employees not to disclose.
- 4.3 The policy document sets out a series of aims and is accompanied by operational guidance for employees and managers that is a working document and will be kept updated as required.
- 4.4 Implementation of the policy will delivered via the following aims:
- Set out clearly the council's position in relation to addressing domestic abuse for employees.
  - Provide guidance on how the council can provide a safe and supportive working environment for those who are affected by domestic abuse.
  - Help raise awareness of the signs of domestic abuse and what internal and external support may be available to employees who are affected by this.
  - Ensure confidential and sympathetic handling of situations for employees arising from domestic abuse.
  - Provide a framework for managers to support those experiencing domestic abuse (Guidance for Managers on Domestic Abuse).
  - Provide a framework for addressing the behaviour of employees who may be perpetrators of abuse and who may pose a risk to other employees within the context of their work.
  - Work with partners and other professionals to ensure this policy remains current and relevant.
- 4.5 The policy provides details of the types of domestic abuse, recognising that this is not just limited to physical abuse and that employees may be subjected to other, more subtle, abuse such as psychological abuse, which they may not recognise as such.
- 4.6 The policy reflects the new legislation which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which creates for the first time a specific offence of domestic abuse that criminalises abusive behaviour towards a partner or ex-partner, including psychological and emotional abuse and coercive, controlling behaviour.
- 4.7 Further detailed information and guidance will sit alongside this policy for use by managers. (Guidance for Managers on Domestic Abuse).

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The new Domestic Abuse Policy sets out the Council's commitment to provide a safe and supportive environment at work for those who are being affected by, or who are risk from, domestic abuse or violence.
- 5.2 Given the escalation in cases during the current Covid 19 pandemic, it is recommended that this policy is implemented as soon as possible, in order to provide support for those currently affected by domestic abuse.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy	The Domestic Abuse Policy sets a new policy position for the Council.
6.2 Financial	None
6.3 Legal	In accordance with Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
6.4 HR	Provides a new HR Policy Framework and guidance for employees and managers.
6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty	
6.5.1 Equalities – Protected Characteristics	This policy provides specific guidance and support for those affected by domestic abuse, who are predominantly female, but also includes guidance for men affected by this issue as well as those in same-sex relationships/transgender.
6.5.2 Socio-Economic Duty	Positive impact anticipated
6.5.3 Islands	Positive impact anticipated
6.6	None
6.7	None

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Domestic Abuse Policy