

Draft Corporate Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy

Reviewed

June 2009

Policy Approval

Executive Board

Reasons for introducing the Policy

East Devon District Council acknowledges that domestic violence and abuse is a significant issue in society today and statistics show that 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence and abuse at home at some point in their lives. Additionally, 20% of reported incidents to the police are from male survivors/victims.

We recognise that employees will inevitably be amongst those impacted by domestic violence and abuse and that therefore a clear policy and guidelines are required.

Policy Statement

This policy has been reviewed to reflect a zero tolerance attitude to domestic violence and abuse within the organisation.

The policy aims to provide guidance and support to all employees at EDDC who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse in their personal life as a survivor/victim or perpetrator to make positive domestic or behavioural changes and provide a safe working environment.

EDDC will provide all staff, in particular managers, HR and domestic violence abuse contact officers with an increased awareness of the main issues involved in domestic violence and abuse to recognise potential victims/perpetrators and to provide a supportive structure in which to deal effectively with cases. Those with line management responsibility will take a proactive stance in increasing awareness.

Terms Explained

Domestic violence and abuse - Domestic Violence and Abuse is the misuse of power and control by one person over another within the context of any close relationship, past and present. This abuse may come in a variety of guises including physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual violence and abuse, financial control and abuse and the enforcement of social isolation or restrictions on freedom of movement.

No matter what form it actually takes, domestic violence and abuse is hardly ever an isolated occurrence. It is often a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour by which the perpetrator seeks power over their victim.

Domestic violence occurs in all parts of our society, regardless of how old you are, what gender or race you are, what sexuality or wealth you have or what part of the country you live in.

Survivor/victim – victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse are surviving each day. Victims of domestic violence and abuse suffer in many ways – physically, mentally, and

financially. They often have insecure accommodation and are in fear for their or their children's lives. They have lost the freedom to live how they want, without fear.

Perpetrator – person committing acts of abuse or violence.

Domestic Violence and Abuse Contact Officers – employees with special training who can be the first point of contact for survivors or perpetrators; the Contact Officers provide an alternative for people who would rather not contact their Line Manager.

How will we go about it?

Domestic Violence and Abuse awareness training is now mandatory for all levels of management including team leader and supervisor.

EDDC will introduce training for all staff to help raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse and help people understand what support is available within the organisation.

EDDC will train a group of officers who will act as Contact Officers for Domestic Violence and Abuse. These officers will provide an alternative for survivors and perpetrators if they prefer not to discuss issues with their Line Manager. Human Resources will be available to support Contact Officers, survivors and perpetrators as well as advise Line Managers in how to deal with specific situations.

The Domestic Violence and Abuse Contact Officers are:

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Posters and leaflets will be used to help raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse and the Council will use Domestic Violence and Abuse week to assist in awareness raising. Additionally, we will post details of various contacts on our intranet site so that these are readily visible to all staff.

EDDC is committed to equality in its domestic violence and abuse policy. No employee will be unlawfully disadvantaged on the ground of age, race or ethnicity, disability, gender and marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief under the operation of this policy.

Specific Policy Areas

Devon's Against Domestic Violence and Abuse multi agency partnership (ADVA) aims to increase the safety of victims of domestic violence and abuse in the county. It funds support services in all districts for victims, perpetrators and children as well as training and awareness raising activities. In 2006/7 there were 8,600 reported incidents of domestic violence and abuse to the police in Devon. Domestic violence and abuse is hugely under reported; the more realistic number of victims in Devon exceeds 30,000. In addition to the human suffering in families, the annual cost to services in Devon is estimated to be £18m. The impact of domestic violence and abuse experienced in the home has a direct impact on victims and perpetrators and their colleagues in the workplace.

Domestic violence and abuse normally takes place as a pattern of behaviour that develops over a period of time. EDDC will ensure that appropriate guidance and support is available to survivors/victims of domestic violence and abuse in whatever form it takes.

Although most attacks are by men upon women, domestic violence and abuse occurs in every type of home regardless of the individual's gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion, belief or ethnicity or social/economic profile.

Employees who have identified that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse will be provided with every reasonable consideration both personally and professionally. They will not be judged or ridiculed by any employee but will be provided with a sympathetic and supportive response.

EDDC will support employees in making positive changes and in providing a safe and positive working environment.

Any formal action as a result of poor punctuality, attendance, work performance and productivity arising from violence and abuse can be avoided through promotion of this policy and the supporting guidance notes for managers.

EDDC will provide secure and safe working for its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Where appropriate, reasonable additional measures will be taken by managers to protect the safety of those experiencing domestic violence and abuse while travelling between home and work, whilst at work or when carrying out Council duties.

Managers will ensure that reasonable additional measures are taken to protect personal information regarding those who are known to be victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse. For further information please see Managers' Guide for Domestic Violence and Abuse.

An employee who is cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure. The Council reserves the right to consider use of the disciplinary procedure should an employee's activities outside of work have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed, or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute.

This policy supports the Devon ADVA Partnership which is working for the community of Devon in raising awareness of the issues involved and the extent of the problem and offering support and guidance to those who are victims/survivors and perpetrators.

Outcomes

A supportive culture in which Domestic Violence and Abuse is identified and in which both survivors and perpetrators are supported but where it is clear that there is a zero tolerance attitude to violence and abuse within the organisation.

Who is responsible for delivery?

Strategic Management Team, Human Resources, Line Managers and all staff.

Performance Monitoring

Review will take place through feedback from Line Managers and Domestic Violence and Abuse Contact Officers.

Policy Consultation

Consultation includes managers at all levels, staff joint forum and Executive Board.

Policy Review

The Head of Organisational Development will review this policy in 2012 or earlier if feedback suggests that a review is required and appropriate.

Related Policies and Strategies

Well being at work strategy
Absence management policy
Flexible working policy
Maternity policy
Dealing with unsatisfactory performance policy
Disciplinary policy and procedure

Devon ADVA Strategy 2007-2009 available at www.adva.org.uk

Contacts:

- National Domestic Violence Helpline (24/7) - **0808 2000 247**
Police – **999**
- Refuges: - The national women's refuge helpline is - **0808 2000 247**

- **There are five women's refuges in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay:**

East Devon - **01404 44772**
Exeter - **01392 667144** (+24 hour crisis line)
North Devon - **01271 321946**
Plymouth - **01752 56228**
South Devon - **01803 524594**

- **Outreach support for women: There are services in each district:**

Exeter 24 Hour Helpline – 0800 328 3070 (free local calls)
East Devon - **01392 435560**
Exeter - **01392 426483**
Mid Devon - **01392 426521**
North Devon and Torridge - **01271 370079**
South Hams and Teignbridge - **01364 644088**
West - **01837 55228**

Safe Project (For girls and young women aged 14-25 in Exeter Safe Project
01392 667147
East Devon and Mid Devon) - **01392 490583**

- **Outreach support for men: There is a telephone and website service for male victims/survivors:**
- MALE - 0808 801 0327 , <http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/contact-male.htm> and email on info@mensadviceline.org.uk