****

**Domestic Abuse – Guidance for Managers**

**1 Introduction**

1.1 This purpose of this guidance is to ensure that employees who are experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse are supported and enabled to remain productive and at work. It also sets out how managers can help team members experiencing domestic abuse.

**2 Definitions**

2.1 Domestic abuse can take many forms, including violence, abuse or threatening behaviour between adults who are, or have been, partners or family members. Abuse can be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, verbal or financial. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone.

**3 Information for Managers**

One in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence or abuse at some point in their lifetime. It is therefore very likely that all workplaces will have employees that have experienced or are experiencing some form of domestic abuse.

Managers should be aware of the following:

* 75% of those experiencing abuse are targeted at work (including on their way to and from work).
* It is possible to use workplaces resources such as phone and email to perpetuate abuse.
* Domestic abuse can take many forms. As well as physical abuse it can include emotional, verbal, sexual or financial abuse – it is about the abuse of power and control of one person by another.
* On average, a woman will experience 35 episodes of domestic abuse before seeking help.
* Men are less likely to tell anyone about experiencing domestic violence than women.
* People experiencing domestic abuse can be subject to disciplinary action or even lose their jobs because of (for example) lateness and absence when the underlying cause is unknown. It estimated that around 2% of employed women lose their job as a result of domestic abuse, and 20% need to take time off work.
* Domestic abuse is often a hidden crime, and many incidents are not reported to the police.
* Domestic abuse can cause employees to be absent from work, late or underperform.
* Employees may wish to remain at work because they see the workplace as a safe place.

There are simple steps that managers and organisations can take to respond to this sensitive issue. [Advice is available from HR at all times].

There can be signs that someone could be experiencing domestic abuse. For example, sudden changes in behaviour or performance, unexplained absences or a changed appearance (such as dress) – but remember there could be many reasons for these changes. If you suspect that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, you can open a conversation – simply ask someone how they are or acknowledge your observations and ask if everything is okay or if they need to discuss anything. [Signpost EAP or Occupational Health Services where available].

**4 Roles and Responsibilities**

4.1 Managers have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help. The manager may be in a position to notice potential signs of domestic abuse, and can, with support from HR if required, encourage the employee to discuss any issues they are experiencing.

4.2 Where managers become aware of domestic abuse, they are responsible for ensuring:

* confidentiality in all instances (except in relation to child protection) – there may be occasions where it is necessary to agree with the employee what (if anything) colleagues should be told where there is a risk of incidents in the workplace
* ensuring the safety of all team members is protected [taking appropriate support and advice from health and safety / security if required] – particular care should be taken in the event that the employee is a lone worker
* signposting relevant support [such as an EAP]
* advising the employee on relevant policies [Special Leave / Domestic Emergency Leave / Flexible Working] and applying appropriate discretion on the use of these policies
* taking action to enable the employee to remain at work – working with the individual at all times
* notifying HR (with permission of the individual)
* undertaking a risk assessment in relation to the employee and colleagues.

**5 Principles of [our / company name] approach to domestic abuse**

* All employees who are experiencing domestic abuse will be supported, regardless of the type of abuse.
* HR will be able to support a manager on taking practical steps to enable the individual to remain at work.
* [We / the company] recognises that a high proportion of employees who experience domestic abuse are targeted at work and it is possible to use workplace resources (such as phones or email) to perpetuate that abuse. [We / the company] will take practical steps, in discussion with the employee, in order to minimise the risk at work. This could include (for example) diverting phone calls, changing phone numbers, alerting reception staff, temporary changes to work location or flexible working arrangements.
* The organisation recognises that those experiencing domestic abuse may need to be absent from work from time to time and will assist them by using special leave policies. [We / the company] will also be flexible with regard to absences from work. Individual absences can be discussed between the employee and their manager, with support from HR if required.
* Employees may request confidential discussions about domestic abuse at work with a member of Human Resources if they do not feel that they can discuss the issue with their manager.
* Any incidents of domestic abuse in the workplace will be recorded.

Where both parties work for [us / the company], HR should be consulted on appropriate action.

**6 Safety Considerations for Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse**

An individual experiencing domestic abuse may be vulnerable at work. Managers should ideally discus with individual experiencing abuse to discuss practical steps that can be taken to ensure safety in the workplace. [HR will support these conversations]. These steps may include:

* Are there are any specific risks related to the work location of the employee. E.g. is the building open access? Can the individual be seen from outside the premises? If yes, consider if any of the risks can be minimised, e.g. by moving the individual on a temporary or permanent basis.
* Is there anyone that should be notified about the situation, e.g. security or reception staff? This should only be undertaken with the employee’s express consent. Consider whether it is necessary to provide them with a photograph of the perpetrator.
* Advise the employee who they should contact internally in an emergency?
* Review if the employee undertakes any lone working? If yes, consider how this could be minimised or any risks mitigated.
* How does the individual travel to and from work? If the individual drives, where do they park? Consider if any support or adjustment could be provided, e.g. provision of a parking space close to the work location.
* Consider working hours. If a perpetrator is aware of the individual’s routine, it may be beneficial to change working hours on a temporary or permanent basis. In this event, this should be agreed quickly and would not need to go through the full flexible working procedure.
* Phone calls – consider if these could be diverted or if phone numbers need to be changed. If phone numbers are usually available on the company website, consider removing these.
* Does the individual need any time off – for example if they have to attend court appointments, address housing issues, etc. Managers have discretion to use [special leave / unpaid leave / flexible working policies ]in these circumstances.

All aspects of this plan should be agreed with the employee concerned and kept confidential. Communication with other employees should always be with the agreement of the individual experiencing the abuse.