

# **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

## **Staff Domestic Abuse Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) does not tolerate violence and abuse. We are dedicated to tackling domestic abuse (DA) and ensuring that all staff feel safe at work. This policy outlines how to identify signs of domestic abuse among staff and respond with accordingly.
- 1.2 This policy supports the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) framework which aims to improve Local Authority response to domestic abuse. TMBC will prioritise the DAHA values and endeavour to uphold them in all areas of work.
- 1.3 TMBC is committed to ensuring that support is in place for staff that are experiencing domestic abuse and that our approach is led by the victim/survivor.
- 1.4 TMBC recognises the importance of awareness raising and will work to ensure that all staff understand DA. We will make it clear to all staff the council's stance on domestic abuse.
- 1.5 The Employee Domestic Abuse Policy will be supported by the Employee Domestic Abuse Procedure which will provide practical support and guidance on how to respond in cases of domestic abuse.

## **2. The Domestic Abuse Act**

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines DA as the behaviour of a person towards another person if both are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other; and if the behaviour is abusive.
- 2.2 Definition of personally connected:
  - They are or have been married to each other
  - They are or have been civil partners of each other
  - They have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement has been terminated)
  - They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether the agreement has been terminated)
  - They are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
  - They each have or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
  - They are relatives.
  - A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if the person is a parent of the child or the person has parental responsibility for the child.
- 2.3 Behaviour is Abusive if consists of any of the following:
  - Physical or sexual abuse
  - Violent or threatening behaviour
  - Controlling or coercive behaviour
  - Economic abuse

- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- 2.4 It is important to note that women experiencing domestic abuse may also be experiencing other forms of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence.
- 2.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises that children who have witnessed domestic abuse are now considered victims in their own right.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1 This policy can be read in conjunction with other TMBC staff policy and national policy.
- 3.2 Staff Policy
- [Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure.pdf](#)
  - [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
  - [Flexible Working Time Off Policy 2024.pdf](#)
  - [Sickness Absence Policy and Proceedure.pdf](#)
  - [Disciplinary Procedure.pdf](#)
  - [Menopause in the Workplace Policy 2025.pdf](#)
- 3.3 National legislation
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
  - [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
  - [Equality Act 2010](#)
  - [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#)
  - [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

### **4. Policy Aims and Intent**

- 4.1 TMBC believe that no staff member should live in fear of domestic abuse. We intend for staff experiencing domestic abuse to be met with empathy, support and a non-judgemental approach from colleagues and management.
- 4.2 This policy outlines how TMBC will identify signs of domestic abuse among staff, respond to disclosures and what support will be provided to staff members that are experiencing domestic abuse.
- 4.3 The council will aim to,
- Identify indicators of domestic abuse such as unexplained injuries, frequent absences from work or personality changes.
  - Provide survivor-led support for staff experiencing domestic abuse.
  - Ensure that all staff and management have been trained on DA and are confident responding to disclosures from colleagues.
  - Uphold the DAHA framework throughout all aspects of support.

## **5. Awareness in the workplace**

- 5.1 TMBC will provide training on domestic abuse so that all staff, particularly Line Managers, can identify indicators of DA and understand the potential impacts it has on colleagues.
- 5.2 Staff will be able to disclose experiences of DA to a Line Manager, colleague, a member of Personnel Services or a member of the DA Champions Network.
- 5.3 TMBC will ensure the domestic abuse policy and procedure is accessible to staff on the intranet. Information on domestic abuse will also include in staff briefings, new staff inductions and on the staff intranet.
- 5.4 TMBC will engage in awareness raising in office spaces by providing posters and leaflets signposting to DA services.
- 5.5 This policy will also include a list of local and national domestic abuse services for staff to access if needed. This will include a list of specialist/ by and for services. See Appendix 1

## **6. Responding to disclosures**

- 6.1 Staff wishing to make a disclosure of domestic abuse will be able to request a safe, confidential space to do so.
- 6.2 TMBC will respond to disclosures with sensitivity, confidentiality and flexibility. TMBC will always maintain a survivor-led approach and respect staff's ability to make their own decisions. TMBC understands that victim/survivors are the experts in their experience and will work with the staff member to create a robust safety plan that meets their needs.
- 6.3 Line managers can offer staff a range of support options including but not limited to.
  - Paid leave for relevant appointments such as counselling, solicitors, court, medical, support agencies or rearranging childcare.
  - Flexible working to mitigate disruption caused by domestic abuse.
  - Temporary or permanent changes to working hours or shift pattern.
  - Measures to safeguard working environment, such as changing staff's work number to avoid harassing calls, removing staff to a private office space, making reception staff aware of perpetrator if they attend office requesting to speak with victim/survivor.
  - Encouraging staff to utilise the Employee Assistance Programme for free advice and counselling services.
  - Providing staff with information on external DA support services of courses such as Own My Life or Freedom Programme.

- 6.4 In an instant where the staff member is considered high risk through professional judgement, TMBC will make appropriate referrals to safeguard the staff member and associated persons. This can include a MARAC referral, referral to children or adult safeguarding or contacting the emergency services.

## **7. Holding perpetrators accountable**

- 7.1 TMBC will always hold perpetrators accountable for abusive behaviour, even if they are an employee of the council. TMBC recognise the challenges that victim/survivors face when making a disclosure. These challenges can be exacerbated in the workplace due to fear of an escalation or not being believed by the employer.
- 7.2 If a victim/survivor discloses they are experiencing domestic abuse from a TMBC employee, the council will believe the survivor and put in safety measures referenced above to safeguard the staff member. TMBC will take action against the perpetrator if they are found guilty of an offence through criminal proceedings or it is found that they have been using Council property/equipment to abuse their victim. TMBC may also take other action against the perpetrator as appropriate.
- 7.3 Incidents at work will be dealt with under the Disciplinary or Anti-Bullying and Harassment policies. Abuse of provisions in this policy are a serious disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.
- 7.4 If an employee recognises that they are a perpetrator and approaches requests support, TMBC will signpost the staff member to local perpetrator services.

## **8. DA Champions Network**

- 8.1 TMBC will develop and maintain a Domestic Abuse Champions Network. The network will include members from different backgrounds who will act as a point of contact in their teams and the wider council for staff who require information or support.
- 8.2 DA Champions will receive DA training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role. It is understood that DA Champions are not specialists and will promote the network alongside their work obligations. They do not replace co-located specialist roles.
- 8.3 The role of a DA Champion will include:
- Providing support to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.
  - Act as a point of contact in their team and wider council.
  - Raising awareness of DA and its impacts.
  - Promoting cultural and attitudinal shifts in their team.

- To build relationships with external agencies.
- 8.4 TMBC encourages and welcomes input from staff with lived experiences of domestic abuse on how we can improve our response to DA. We are committed to innovation and are striving to ensure our council is inclusive to all.

## **9. Data Protection**

- 9.1 TMBC understands the challenges that staff face when making a disclosure, this information will be kept strictly confidential, with the understanding that a breach of confidentiality could have a serious impact on the staff member.
- 9.2 TMBC recognises that there will be instances where confidentiality will need to be breached lawfully in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- 9.3 Where there is a significant safeguarding concern for the staff member or related persons, TMBC can share information with appropriate services to fulfil safeguarding obligations.
- 9.4 It is best practice for TMBC to inform the staff member when information needs to be shared without their consent. Information sharing should be conducted with sensitivity and consider whether this increases risk to the victim/survivor.
- 9.5 TMBC will inform the staff of their right to confidentiality and will not share any information without their explicit consent.
- 9.6 If a record is kept on the discussion between Line Manager and employee, the record will be retained in a safe location which is not public. The document will be restricted and use password protection. The document will be saved discreetly to avoid breaches in confidentiality. Disclosures will not be visible on employee's personal record.

## **10. Compliance**

- 10.1 We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if there are any significant changes in Policy before this time.
- 10.2 We will also review this policy in response to any Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews or any Serious Case Reviews

## 11. Appendix 1

11.1 Below are organisations that can offer support for Domestic Abuse.

### 11.2 Local Services

- **One Stop Shop**, 4 New Wharf Road, Tonbridge, TN9 1DS. Every Wednesday from 9am to noon. Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops offer free advice, information and support from a range of agencies under one roof to help victims of domestic abuse.
- **DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Service)** [office@davss.org.uk](mailto:office@davss.org.uk) or 01892 570538
- **Look Ahead** [kentdomesticabuse@lookahead.org.uk](mailto:kentdomesticabuse@lookahead.org.uk) or 0333 010 4660.
- **Victim Support** Assessment and Triage: 0808 168 9276
- **Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service**: 0808 168-9111

11.3 TMBC recognises that it does not fund any specialist or 'by and for' services. It is important that staff can access specialist services.

- **Ashiana Network**, Advice and support for South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women. Call 020 8539 0427
- **Kiran Support Services** Advice and support for women and children from Asian backgrounds. Call 020 8558 1986. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Email: [Info@kiranss.org.uk](mailto:Info@kiranss.org.uk)
- **IMECE**- Advice, information, and support for women from Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds. Call 020 7354 1359. Available 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday
- **Karma Nirvana**- Advice and support for victims of honour-based violence and forced marriage. Call 0800 5999 247. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- **Southall Black Sisters**- Advice and support for Black, African, or Caribbean Women, as well as survivors with no recourse to public funds. Call 0208 571 9595. Available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- **Latin American Women's Aid**- Advice and support for Latin American Women. Call 020 7275 0321 phone number has a web link on it that goes to a mobile number. Available 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday
- **The Traveller Movement**- Advice and peer support for women from Irish, Gypsy, or Roma Traveller backgrounds experiencing abuse. Call 0207 607 2002
- **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (GALOP)**- Advice and support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Intersex survivors. Call 0800 999 5248. Available 10am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10 to 8pm Wednesday to Thursday.
- **Respect Men's Advice Line**- Advice and support for male survivors of Domestic Abuse. [Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](#). Call 0808 8010327- Monday–Friday 10am-5pm

### 11.4 Support for Perpetrators

- **Community Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Programme (CDAP)**: [kentcdap@gmail.com](mailto:kentcdap@gmail.com) or 07956228891/07718120870
- **Respect**: A support service providing advice and guidance to perpetrators of domestic abuse who need help changing their behaviour. Call 0808 802 4040 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.