

Newcastle City Council
**Domestic Violence Policy
for Staff and Elected Members**

March 2009

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Newcastle City Council Domestic Violence Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

It is Newcastle City Council's policy that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically and confidentially.

This Policy is for employees and Elected Members who are experiencing domestic violence and for Managers and colleagues to support employees and Elected Members who are experiencing domestic violence.

This policy also aims to support Elected Member and employees, in particular front line staff, who receive a disclosure of domestic violence from a member of the public or a service user, to give guidance and information on action they can take to assist victims/survivors of domestic violence.

2.0 Introduction

Domestic Violence is a serious social and criminal problem that accounts for almost a quarter of all violent crime and has significant human and financial consequences for individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Incidents of domestic violence are common and have a serious impact on those who experience them. Studies have consistently demonstrated the prevalence of domestic violence, with an estimated 1 in 4 women experiencing domestic violence each year. Despite this, its effects and the costs within the workplace remain largely hidden and unidentified by most employers. Research has shown that a significant proportion of women who experience domestic violence have to take time off work. Many other women also reported symptoms that have a long-term effect on their work performance such as depression, anxiety, or stress.

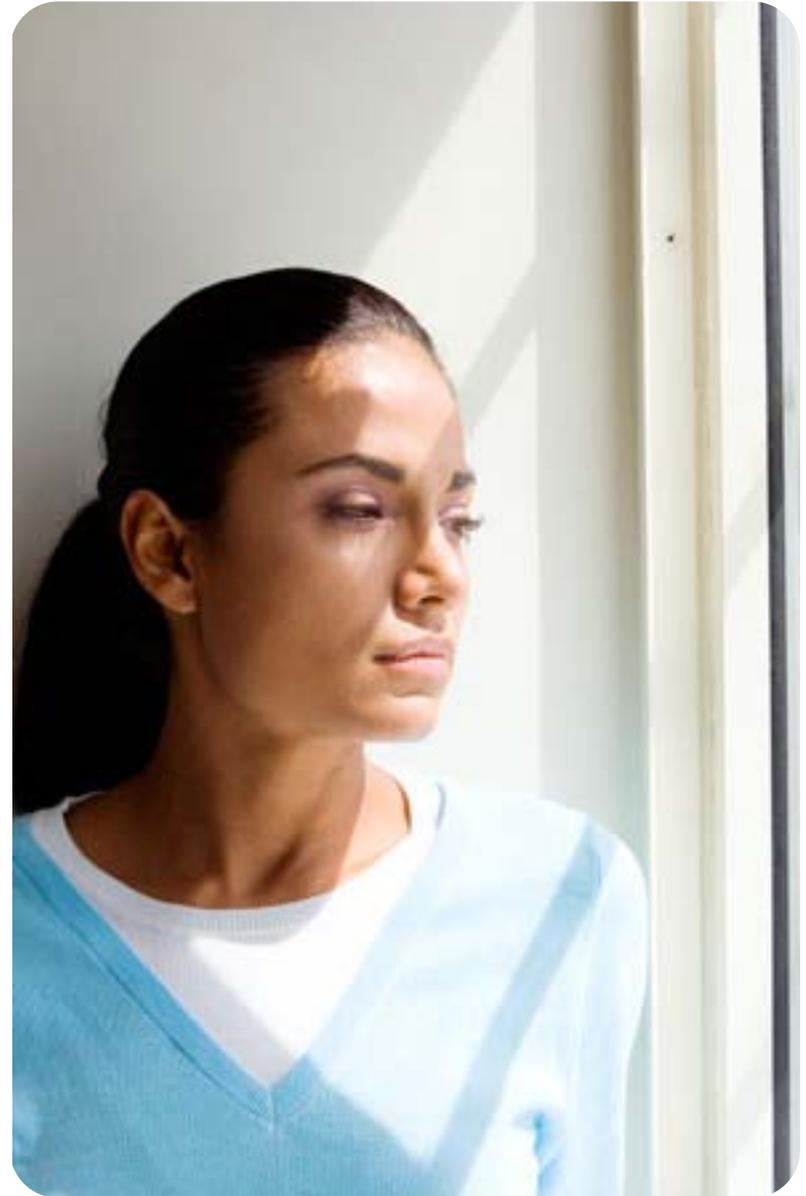
Domestic violence is therefore not just an issue for agencies that provide services directly to the public. It is an issue that affects all sections of society. We acknowledge that within the Newcastle City Council workforce, there are those who have experienced violence in their personal or professional lives and those who may be perpetrators of violence.

It is important therefore, that we develop clear and effective responses to help minimise the impact of domestic violence on City Council employees. The following guidelines have been produced in line with existing corporate policies and procedures, to help managers deal with these issues appropriately.

3.0 Aim of this Policy

By adopting this policy, Newcastle City Council aims to:

- Reduce recurrence and prevent the incidence of domestic violence,
- Improve the safety and welfare of both adults and children who are affected,
- Increase awareness and understanding of the issue of domestic violence within all communities in Newcastle,
- Improve the Council's response to domestic violence and increase the support it provides to break the cycle or prevent a violent situation intensifying,
- Provide a consistent and achievable policy framework within which the Council can work when supporting those experiencing or affected by domestic violence,
- Encourage multi-agency working to ensure delivery of a seamless service to victims, survivors and their children.



4.0 Definition

The Government defines domestic violence as: "Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."

The government also made explicit that such issues as forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and 'so-called honour based violence' are encompassed within this definition. See Appendix 3 for detailed information on Forced Marriage, So-Called Honour Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation.

Domestic Violence includes but is not limited to:

- physical violence,
for example: slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing, damage to property or items of sentimental value, attempted murder or murder.
- sexual violence,
for example: any non-consensual sexual activity, including rape, sexual assault, coercive sexual activity, or refusing safe sex
- restricting freedom,
for example: controlling who you see, or where you go, what you wear and what you do, stalking, imprisonment, forced marriage
- emotional/psychological abuse,
for example: intimidation, social isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, constant criticism, enforced trivial routines
- economic abuse,
for example: stealing, depriving or taking control of money, running up debts, withholding benefits books or bank cards.

Domestic Violence is not limited to any particular type of person or relationship. Anyone can experience domestic violence. Research evidence (British Crime Survey: England and Wales (2000), London: Home Office) indicates that the majority of domestic violence is abuse of women by men, however, domestic violence also occurs in Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender relationships (LGBT) , in heterosexual relationships when men are abused by women and in caring and other family relationships, for example when grown up children use violence against their parents.

People experience domestic violence regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, sexual orientation and lifestyle. The abuse can begin at any time - in new relationships or after many years spent together.

Domestic violence is a systematic pattern of abuse that is committed within a current or non-current partner or family relationship. It is rarely a one off event. It includes a range of abusive behaviours that tend to escalate over time, and can occur in new relationships or after many years.

Please note that whilst it is overwhelmingly women who experience domestic violence, these guidelines apply equally to any employee or Elected Member who requires help and advice, including males and those in same sex relationships experiencing domestic violence.

5.0 The victim: identifying the problem and responding to it

It is most likely that a manager will become aware that an employee is experiencing domestic violence through associated issues such as absence monitoring or poor performance. It is less likely that the employee will approach their manager with their problems in the first instance, or that they will disclose to people at work about the violence they are experiencing. As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered. This in turn could mean that the member of staff is able to deal with their situation far more effectively.

Managers need to develop a sensitive and non-judgmental approach when dealing with employees who have experienced domestic violence, which can include:

- Taking the employee seriously and take time to listen to them
- Ensuring that any discussion about the employee's situation takes place in private and that you respect their confidentiality as far as possible (see below for further guidance).
- Understanding that the member of staff may not wish to approach their line manager and may prefer to involve a third party such as a colleague, trade union representative or Domestic Violence Officer (see Section 6 below for details of this role and contact information) who can advise the employee and/or their line manager on what measures can be taken.
- If an employee does not wish to speak to their line manager, they should be advised of the difficulties which may arise if the manager is not aware of the relevant facts and circumstances (for instance if there is a potential health and safety issue or if other action is being taken on performance or absence monitoring).
- Being aware that there may be additional issues faced by the employee because of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, disability etc.
- Being non-judgmental; the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process. Research has shown that it can take a long time to break free of a violent relationship.
- Do not assume that because an individual returns to or stays in a violent relationship that they want or deserve violence, or that the violence is not severe or does not take place. Statistics have shown that the risk of more serious assaults, permanent injury and murder taking place increases significantly when a victim decides to leave home or immediately after. It is important therefore, not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of violence is exaggerated.
- Being aware of what support is available and explore these options with the employee (a list of support agencies for women and men is attached under Appendix 1 of the full policy). However, if the employee does not want you to contact other agencies, you must follow their wishes

6.0 Domestic Violence Officers

Domestic Violence Officers (DVO) are based internally and drawn from the workforce, to provide a confidential signposting service to employees experiencing domestic violence, their managers and colleagues. They are an important resource for managers and staff who have questions or need guidance and help with domestic violence issues.

Each DVO will receive training on issues related to domestic violence, including information on appropriate support agencies. Publicity will be distributed across the authority to advertise the name and location of the DVOs.

The main features of the DVO's role are to:

- Be available and approachable as a first point of contact for employees experiencing domestic violence;
- Listen to, reassure and support individuals,
- Keep any information confidential (within the boundaries as outlined in Section 8 below) e.g. child protection, protection of vulnerable adults,
- Respond in a sensitive, non-judgmental manner,
- Ensure that the employee is aware of the support options available to them and remains in control of the situation,
- Encourage the employee to seek the advice of other relevant agencies
- Provide advice and answer questions from managers supporting staff experiencing domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Officers cannot provide:

- HR advice,
- Advice on disciplinary proceedings,
- Advocacy or casework support for staff experiencing domestic violence.

Contact details for the Domestic Violence Officers can be obtained from the intranet or:

- Community Safety Unit,
- Human Resources,
- UNISON,
- Occupational Health.

7.0 Ensuring Safety

The responsibilities of employers, employees and others for the health and safety of persons at work are defined by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The City Council has developed guidance for managers to deal with incidents where an employee is verbally abused or threatened or physically assaulted in the course of their duties. This is detailed in the Corporate Health and Safety at Work Policy, which can be found on the intranet. Failure to comply with the Policy may result in disciplinary action.

This policy details the responsibilities of managers and employees, however, managers may have to consider additional factors if these incidents involve domestic violence. These incidents may involve violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phonecalls, or intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator.

These issues could be addressed by the following measures:

- Improve security measures, such as changing key pad numbers or ensuring that access to buildings is open to authorised staff only.
- Remind reception or Switchboard staff not to divulge information about employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.
- Offer temporary or permanent changes in workplace, work times and patterns, helping to make the employee less at risk at work and on their journeys to and from work. This could include changes to the office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or from ground floor windows.
- Offer changes in specific duties, such as answering phones or working in reception area, or in exceptional circumstances, transfer to an other job of the same grade, if an alternative is not easily found.
- Agree what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser rings or calls at the workplace. Provide colleagues or porters with a photograph of the abuser and other relevant details such as car registration numbers which may help them to maintain security in the workplace
- Make sure that the systems for recording staff whereabouts during the day are adequate and if the work requires visits outside the office, considering how risks can be minimised (e.g. change duties or allow another colleague to accompany them on certain journeys). See the Corporate Health & Safety Codes of Practice, under Health and Safety Inspections Checklists for Managers
- Record any incidents of violence in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, e-mails or visits to an employee by their partner/ex-partner. You should also take down details of any witnesses to these incidents. These records could be used if the employee wants to press charges or apply for an injunction against the alleged perpetrator. The employer could also apply for an injunction if the action of an alleged perpetrator impinges on the health and safety of staff.
- It is important to also consider the safety of work colleagues and service users if the alleged perpetrator has access to the victim at work, whereby work colleagues and/or service users potentially becoming involved as a result of an assault on the victim.

NB Managers may have to take into account whether the above measures are operationally appropriate. However, ensuring that employees are safe should be of primary consideration throughout this process.

8.0 Confidentiality

Once an employee has confided to their manager that they are experiencing domestic violence, the manager should reassure them that they will keep this information confidential as far as possible. One of the exceptions to this is where child protection issues could arise, for instance, if an employee gives information which suggests that their child or another child is at risk from abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect). Consideration also needs to be given if a vulnerable adult could be at risk from abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect)

The manager needs to be satisfied that appropriate steps are being taken to protect any dependant children and if they are not satisfied that they must make a referral to Children's Social Care and inform the employee of their concerns and action. Information and advice on child protection issues can be obtained from Children's Social Care or the LSCB (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

In the vulnerable adult circumstances, the manager should inform the employee that they are seeking further advice from an appropriate agency such as Adult Services or the Safeguarding Adults Unit and that they may have to pass this information onto these bodies. Information and advice on safeguarding adult issues can be obtained from Adult Services or from Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Unit (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

Managers have a duty to maintain a secure environment for all staff and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks. However, it is essential that you agree with the individual concerned what information to tell colleagues. Managers should remind staff that this information is confidential and any unauthorised breaches of this could be subject to disciplinary action being taken.

The consequences of breaching confidentiality could have serious effects for the person experiencing domestic violence. Statistics have shown that the risk of more serious assaults, permanent injury and murder taking place increases significantly when a woman decides to leave home or immediately after. It is important therefore, not to underestimate the danger or assume that the fear of violence is exaggerated.

9.0 Special Leave and other supportive measures

The Conditions of Service (Section 9: Other Paid Leave) has provision to grant up to two weeks special leave with pay for a variety of purposes, including for an unforeseen personal or domestic crisis. Managers should look sympathetically at requests for reasonable time-off with pay for employees who have disclosed that they are experiencing domestic violence. Unpaid leave (Section 10 of the Conditions of Services) can also be granted subject to certain conditions.

Managers may receive requests for time-off from employees who are experiencing domestic violence, to arrange appointments during the normal working day. These requests should be treated sympathetically. These appointments could include, but are not limited to:

- Appointments with support agencies, e.g. Newcastle Women's Aid, Panah, Victim Support, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, Children's Social Care, Adult Services or counsellors, Mesmac,
- Arranging rehousing,
- Meetings with criminal justice agencies, e.g. the Police, solicitors
- Making alternative childcare arrangements, including meetings with schools.

Managers should also explore other measures supportively, such as temporary negotiated hours. "Temporary negotiated hours" means that by agreement between the manager and employee, the employee's working hours can be temporarily varied for a specifically agreed period of time to allow them some flexibility while they are dealing with a short term crisis. This would generally apply to staff working outside of the flexi system and does not extend to allowing an employee to work shorter hours for full time pay, other than as allowed for under the emergency leave provisions.

Under the Special Leave Policy, an employee summoned as a witness in a criminal court case will be granted leave. The employee must claim an allowance from the court for loss of earnings and the Council will make up any difference between that and normal pay. Unpaid leave may also be given to an employee to attend a court or tribunal in other circumstances. See the Special Leave Policy for further details.

Managers should record absences or application for special leave in accordance with normal Council procedures.

Individuals leaving a violent partner may face considerable financial hardship or have concerns about finding suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. Personnel advice should be sought about what appropriate measures can be taken to help employees in these circumstances, for example referring employees to Newcastle's MoneyWise Credit Union or the Citizen's Advice Bureau for confidential financial advice and assistance. See Appendix 1 for contact details.

If the employee has disclosed that their partner has access to their finances or is exerting economic pressure upon them the Payroll section should be approached to change the method of salary payment.

If appropriate and with the employee's consent, referring the employee to Occupational Health.

10.0 The Perpetrator: what to do if you suspect a Newcastle City Council employee or Elected Member is a perpetrator of violence

Employees and Elected Members should be aware that domestic violence is a serious matter which can lead to criminal convictions.

Section 6 of the Code of Conduct for Employees states that “What you do in your own time is your business so long as you do not:

- put your private interests before your duty to the Council;
- put yourself in a position where your duty and private interests conflict or could appear to conflict; or
- do anything which could harm the Council’s reputation

Conduct outside of work, whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction, can lead to disciplinary action against an employee because of its employment implications and because it undermines the confidence the Council, as an employer, has in the employee and can potentially impact on the Council’s reputation. There should be an investigation of the facts as far as possible, a view taken and consideration whether the conduct is sufficiently serious to warrant instituting the disciplinary procedures. Managers should refer to the Code of Practice on the Conducting of Disciplinary Investigations (available on the Organisational Development website on the intranet) prior to instituting any disciplinary procedures. <http://194.61.175.66/stratsuppv2.nsf/a/od>

In addition, such conduct may make certain job duties inappropriate and justify consideration for dismissal. For example, if a perpetrator of domestic violence was employed to provide services to vulnerable women and children, a conviction for domestic violence could make it untenable for them to retain their post.

Similarly, proven harassment and intimidation of Newcastle City Council employees by their partner or ex partner who also works for the Council will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. This includes improper use of email to receive or transmit material that is designed to or is likely to cause inconvenience or distress, or to create, receive or transmit any defamatory material (see Email Acceptable Use Guidelines on the intranet for more details).

If any of the circumstances detailed above are brought to a manager’s attention, advice should be sought from the Organisational Development website on the intranet in the first instance. <http://194.61.175.66/stratsuppv2.nsf/a/od>

Elected Members are bound by the Code of Conduct for Members as detailed in the Newcastle Charter (Part 5.2A). Elected Members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute. This includes conduct outside an Elected Member’s official capacity if that conduct constitutes a criminal offence for which the Member has been convicted (including an offence committed before the date the Member took office, but for which they are convicted after that date). Advice on dealing with Elected Members should be sought from Democratic Services.

11.0 Raising Awareness

Newcastle City Council is committed to not tolerating violence against women, children and men. It is essential therefore that the working environment promotes the view that such violence is unacceptable and that will not be condoned, nor should it be made the subject of jokes or graphics.

The Council will aim to raise awareness through the following measures:

- Preparation and distribution of information publicising the issue and the Council's policy,
- Training for departmental management teams and other appropriate managers and supervisors,
- Briefings for other appropriate staff, in particular front line staff and customer services centre staff,
- Briefings for Elected Members
- Inclusion of issues relating to domestic violence in relevant in-house training sessions and as part of corporate induction,
- Specialised training or briefing sessions for designated Domestic Violence Officers to ensure they understand their role,
- Publicising the role of the Domestic Violence Officers to the Council's workforce.



12.0 Occupational Health, Newcastle City Council

Members of staff experiencing domestic violence often come to the notice of management due to their sickness absence records.

The Occupational Health Unit (OHU) provides a range of services with the aim of promoting and maintaining good health in the workplace. All managers must read the guidance on OHU support in managing sickness absence. This explains the referral process, the OHU role and, importantly, the responsibilities of managers in effectively using OHU services in relation to sickness absence. This can be accessed on the intranet via the Chief Executive's website.

The OHU can make assessments:

- Following an employee's absence, their fitness to return to work on the basis of normal hours and duties,
- Following an employee's absence, whether a phased return could enable an earlier return to work,
- Whether the employee is likely to be suffering from a disability within the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA),
- Whether frequent short-term absences may be due to any underlying medical condition,
- Whether referral for physiotherapy or counselling is appropriate,
- Other specific requests,
- Whether a further OHU appointment is needed.

Managers need to be clear when they complete the OHS4 referral form what types of assessments they require. Please refer to the 'Support in Managing Sickness Absence' part of the website for further information on the above services.

The City Council has a package of measures aimed at preventing work-related stress, helping employees to avoid becoming stressed and supporting employees who are suffering from stress (Tackling Stress Together – guide for staff and managers) or need support to return to work after long term or short term sickness absences including:

- Sickness absence policy/stress awareness,
- Early referral to Occupational Health by managers of employees who appear to be suffering from stress, or who are absent due to stress,
- Face to face counselling available through manager referral to the Occupational Health Unit.

13.0 Monitoring and Review of the Policy

The Domestic Violence Co-ordinator with support from the Corporate Community Safety Officer Working Group and appropriate overview and Scrutiny Panels will monitor this policy annually to evaluate its effectiveness and update and amend the Policy and Guidance as appropriate.



Appendix 1

Local Support Agencies

Adult Services

Telephone 0191 277 2555 or 0191 277 2077

This service is responsible for the completion of initial assessments, coordinating safeguarding adult alerts and safeguarding adult protection plans.

Safeguarding Adults Unit

0191 278 8156

This Unit is responsible for safeguarding alerts on vulnerable adults that involve paid members of staff and advice should be sought from the Unit.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Telephone: 0845 7697555

Offer free support for alcohol problems.

Broken Rainbow

Telephone: 08452 60 44 60

Mondays & Thursdays 2pm - 8pm; Wednesdays 10am - 1pm

This is a national organisation which provides support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people experiencing domestic violence.

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Children's Social Care

Telephone: 0191 277 2500

This service is responsible for the completion of Initial Assessments, Child In Need Core Assessments, Child in Need Plan monitoring and reviewing, Child protection enquiries, Initial Child Protection Conference Reports.

Cruse Bereavement Care

Telephone: 0844 4779400; 0191-276-5533

Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm

Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. The organisation provides free support and offers information, advice, education and training services for adults, young people and children. They also offer specialist advice for schools.

Children and Young People can contact the freephone helpline on 0808 808 1677

Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Housing

Your Homes Newcastle manages local authority housing on behalf of Newcastle City Council.

To find out your local housing office contact Your Homes Newcastle
Telephone: 0191 278 8600

Housing Offices

Your Homes Newcastle operates community housing offices which provide residents and prospective residents with a local point of contact. A variety of services are available at the offices, including;

- register for Your choice homes
- report a repair
- make a complaint or compliment
- report anti-social behaviour
- access to complementary services, such as Advice and Support

Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Telephone: 0191 211 6470

This is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. It is proactive in driving forward the duty of all partner agencies in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

MESMAC North East

Telephone: 0191 233 1333

This is a gay/bisexual men's health project which offers advice and information on many different health issues anti violence.

www.mesmacnortheast.com

Moneywise Credit Union

Telephone: 0191 276 7957 / 0191 211 6983 / 211 6972

Head Office, Moneywise and Newcastle Credit Union Ltd, 2 Chirton Wynd, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PW. There are 19 other service points across Newcastle.

Newcastle Lesbian Line

Telephone: 0191 261 2277 (Thursday evenings 7.00 – 9.00pm)

This phone line gives and receives information about services and facilities both locally and nationally refer on, with regard to the individual needs of the user / signpost. They provide counselling and support.

www.newcastlelesbianline.co.uk

Newcastle Women's Aid

Telephone: Freephone 0800 923 2622, or 0191 265 1248 (24 hours)

Providing 24 hours safe, emergency accommodation to women and children fleeing domestic violence. The outreach service offers telephone support, advice and advocacy to women experiencing abuse and control and to their manager/employer if required.

North East Council on Addictions (NECA)

Telephone: 0191 222 1262 (Core Services)

Telephone: 0191 233 1026 (Bespoke Services)

Monday to Friday 09.00 -18.30

Offer free support for drug/alcohol addictions and gambling problems.

Panah

Telephone: 0191 284 6998

Panah is a specialist project which offers safe refuge accommodation and an outreach service to Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women and their children.

Police, Newcastle Public Protection Unit, Domestic Violence Officers

Telephone: 03456 043 043 x 62431

Northumbria Police have dedicated Domestic Violence Units staffed by Police Officers who are specially trained to support victims of domestic abuse and investigate domestic violence offences. They can also give advice about legal options and safety issues.

REACH

Telephone: 0191-212-1551

www.reachcentre.org.uk

REACH is a free, confidential counselling, advice and support service which helps women and men aged 16 or over who have been raped or sexually assaulted. The centres are staffed by women who are experienced in dealing with the effects of rape and sexual assault. They will be happy to help you whether or not you wish to report the assault to the police. If you do decide to report it to the police, they can help you do that and act as a contact for you.

Sanctuary Scheme

Telephone: 0191 286 5183

This scheme is available for all tenants and homeowners who are experiencing domestic violence and as a result are considering leaving their home. The scheme helps people to remain living in their home and feel safer by adding a range of security measures to their property to meet their individual needs. Ongoing support will also be offered to ensure victims' safety. A risk assessment and security survey will be carried out by a police officer before any work is agreed by you and/or your landlord. This scheme can be accessed by contacting Victim Support

Social Services Emergency out of hours duty team:

Telephone: 0191 232 8520

Emergency Duty Team for Housing

Telephone: 0191 232 8520

The Samaritans of Tyneside

Telephone: 0191 232 7272 (24 Hours) or 08457 90 90 90 (24 Hours)

Drop in available 9.00am – 9.00pm Monday – Friday (no appointment required)

15 Portland Terrace
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 1QQ

Samaritans provides confidential non-judgemental emotional support 24 hours a day for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Trades Unions and Professional Associations

Many organisations offer their members access to free initial support on work and non-work matters.

UNISON

Telephone: 0191 211 6980

GMB

Telephone: 0191 233 3930

Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre

Telephone: 0191-232-9858 (Helpline, also available evenings)

0191 222 0272 (Admin)

www.tynesidercc.org.uk

Tyneside Rape Crisis based in Newcastle offers a women-only counselling service for women survivors of adult rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

Victim Support

Telephone: 0191 283 5183

Offering free, confidential advice to all victims of domestic violence.

Trained workers are based in the Northumbria Police Public Protection Unit and work alongside the police. You do not have to report to the police to access the service. Any advice/support will be totally confidential. Victim Support is open to anyone experiencing domestic violence. This includes male victims and members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community.

Appendix 2

Policy Context

This policy is aligned with and informed by the following corporate policies and plans:

Newcastle city Council's Corporate Plan, which has the following priorities:

- Adult Social Services & Health:

Strategic Aim 2 - To ensure that every adult is supported to have a good quality of life

Strategic Aim 4 - To ensure that every adult is supported to exercise choice and control

Strategic Aim 5 - To ensure that every adult is supported to be free from discrimination or harassment

Strategic Aim 7 - To ensure that every adult is supported to maintain personal dignity

- Children and Young People:

Are Healthy - enjoy the best physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and development so that they feel good about themselves and their lives.

Stay Safe - safe and protected from harm within their families and communities, as well as the city as a whole

- Neighbourhood Management and Community:

To work towards a Newcastle that is safer for all of its residents and visitors, provides the opportunity for people to get involved in shaping the services it needs and the ways in which they are delivered and supports them in that involvement; improves access to local services from all agencies by delivering them where service users need them to be, in ways that make sense to service users.

The Corporate Equalities Plan, which aims to remove discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, gender and disability.

The Corporate Equalities Policy, which commits to achieving equality of

opportunity by removing all direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of gender

The Gender Equality Scheme, which has the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of the scope and nature of domestic violence,
- Reduce the fear of crime, especially among female residents,
- Ensure men and women have equal access to services, using monitoring data where appropriate,
- Promote and deliver employment policies and practices which meet the needs of all staff,
- Provide support for parents and carers.

The Dignity at Work Policy, seeks to ensure that employees of Newcastle City Council are free from bullying, harassment and intimidation in the workplaces.

Safe Newcastle Strategy 2008 – 11

The Strategy has domestic violence as one of its key objectives, which is informed by the following:

- Public Service Agreement 15 – address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.
- Public Service Agreement 16 – increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training.
- Public Service Agreement 23 – make communities safer.

Appendix 3

Forced Marriage, 'So Called Honour Based Violence' and Female Genital Mutilation

Forced Marriage: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office states that: in a forced marriage, "one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage, or consent is extracted under duress. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure".

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19 states that: "State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child".

In a forced marriage at least one party does not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved. Forced marriage is primarily an issue of violence against women. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30 years, although, there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15 per cent of victims are male.

A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a very long time. In arranged marriages the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with the individuals.

Currently, some two hundred cases of forced marriage are reported to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office each year. Many others go unreported. With greater awareness this figure is likely to increase. The majority of cases of forced marriage encountered in the UK involve South Asian families. However, despite appearances, this is not solely

an Asian issue. A reason for this disparity is that the UK has a large Asian population. There are also cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and within Roma communities. The issue of forced marriage should not be used to stigmatise any community. Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element while others involve a partner coming from overseas or a British citizen being sent abroad.

For guidance on dealing with forced marriage issues, please contact the Domestic Violence Team in the Community Safety Unit 0191 277 7847 (ext 27847).

'So Called Honour Based Violence': Forced marriage cases can develop to the extent where women and men need protection from their family and extended relatives. It is common for individuals being forced to marry to experience being forced to travel abroad, being kidnapped, being physically and mentally abused and in extreme cases being subjected to a so called "honour killing" for bringing shame onto the family by refusing to consent to the marriage.

Honour related violence occurs when perpetrators believe a relative has shamed the family and they believe that the only way to redeem the family's honour is to punish or kill the relative. There are strong links between such abuse, domestic violence and forced marriage.

For guidance on dealing with honour based violence, please contact the Domestic Violence Team in the Community Safety Unit 0191 277 7847 (ext 27847).

Female Genital Mutilation: Female genital mutilation (FGM), often referred to as 'female circumcision', comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural, religious or other non-therapeutic reasons.

FGM has been a social custom in Northern Africa for millennia. Many people link FGM with the religion of Islam, but it is actually a social custom that is practiced by Animists, Christians, and Muslims in countries where FGM is common. Many of the communities that practice FGM are Muslim with religion often cited as a reason, despite the fact that neither the Qu'ran nor any other holy text advocates for FGM. There are many Muslim countries in which the mutilation is essentially unknown, including Algeria, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

FGM is occasionally performed in North America and Europe on girls of families who have emigrated from countries where FGM is practiced. It is estimated that as many as 6,500 girls are at risk of FGM within the UK every year.

FGM is a fundamental violation of the rights of girls. It is discriminatory and violates the rights to equal opportunities, health, freedom from violence, injury, abuse, torture and cruel or inhuman and degrading treatment, protection from harmful traditional practices, and to make decisions concerning reproduction. These rights are protected in international law.

FGM is not an act of hate. It is carried out on children because their parents believe it is in their best interest. In the patriarchal communities where FGM takes place, marriage is necessary for a woman's honour and survival. An uncircumcised woman will stand very little chance of marriage and will not be accepted by her community. In these communities FGM is carried out to safeguard the chastity of a woman before marriage. FGM is used as a means of controlling and de-sexualising women and repressing sexual desire, to

reduce the chance of sexual promiscuity in marriage on the part of the woman. FGM is also carried out for reasons of aesthetics and hygiene and as a means of purification and ensuring that a woman is clean.

For guidance on dealing with FGM issues, please contact the Domestic Violence Team in the Community Safety Unit 0191 277 7847 (ext 27847).

If this information is needed in another format or language, please contact:
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www.newcastle.gov.uk

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