



EMPLOYEE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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Appendix 1 – Indicators of Gender Based Violence

Appendix 2 – Useful Contacts

1. POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 West Lothian Council is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace and preventing violence against women. We know that the impact of gender based violence (GBV) on the health and wellbeing of staff is a serious and recognisable problem. By increasing awareness of the signs of gender based violence, and providing a safe and supportive working environment, the Council can help to support the welfare of an individual experiencing or who has experienced gender based violence.
- 1.2 The Policy recognises a gendered analysis of gender-based violence. This analysis does not exclude men, but rather recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by particular forms of abuse/violence that they experience because they are women and girls.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
- provide guidance and support quickly, positively and in confidence to any employee experiencing GBV in their personal lives
 - raise awareness of GBV as a serious health and social issue including its hidden nature and the impact on those affected by it
 - reinforce West Lothian Council's commitment to tackling GBV and send a clear message to all employees that they will be listened to and supported
 - assist managers to identify and support employees currently (or previously) experiencing GBV
- 2.2 The aims of this Policy are designed to align with the Scottish Government's Equally Safe 2016: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls and the Council's Gender Based Violence Strategy 2021/2024.
- 2.3 Where any of our employees have been accused of perpetrating violence/abuse the Council will take all necessary steps to investigate these matters which may result in disciplinary action being taken.

3. DEFINITION

- 3.1 Gender Based Violence is a term which encompasses a spectrum of abuse experienced disproportionately by women and perpetrated predominantly by men. It is defined within Equally Safe 2016 as:

“Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality and abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It is men who predominantly or exclusively carry out such violence and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as ‘gender-based’ this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women’s and girl’s subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms and social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women’s vulnerability to violence - including:

- domestic abuse

- rape and sexual assault
- childhood sexual abuse
- harassment and stalking
- commercial sexual exploitation
- honour based violence
- female genital mutilation
- forced marriage

4. INDICATORS

4.1 Every case is unique and people deal with difficult personal situations in different ways. As a result, an employee may not disclose, or even feel that they are the victim of GBV. Below are a range of indicators which may suggest an employee is exposed to GBV:

- **Psychological indicators** such as changes in behaviour, mood, emotional resilience and a reluctance to discuss their personal life.
- **Physical indicators** such as repeated injuries, increased fatigue and changes in their presentation and clothing.
- **Productivity indicators** such as persistent late coming, high absenteeism and a decline in standard of work produced.

More detail on each of these categories of indicators can be found in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Please keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list nor should these indicators be seen in isolation. Furthermore, these indicators may be indicative of other concerns unrelated to abuse, therefore it is important to consider the context within which they occur.

5. GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

5.1 Employees are encouraged to act if they suspect that a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees may not want to discuss the suspected abuse with the other employee but concerns should be raised in confidence with a Human Resources adviser or manager.

5.2 Employees who disclose experiencing GBV should be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission. Please note however, that there are some circumstances in which anonymity cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults or where the council needs to act to protect the safety of employees.

5.3 Managers should be sensitive to employee's reticence to report abuse related to sexual orientation where they haven't previously disclosed their sexual orientation.

5.4 Witnessing a colleague experiencing domestic abuse can be traumatic and an employee may feel unable to help. Support can be sought independently and confidentially from the following:

- A line manager, other manager or Human Resources
- The council's Domestic and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT)
- External specialised support such as the organisations **listed in Appendix 2**.

6. GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

6.1 Staff experiencing GBV may choose to disclose, report or seek support from trade union representatives, a line manager or colleague. We do not expect colleagues, line managers and trade union representatives to counsel victims but instead offer information and workplace support while signposting to other organisations. When supporting employees, advice and guidance should be sought from Human Resources before any discussions with employees take place.

6.2 Managers can help support staff by:

- Being aware of the possibility that staff members could be affected by past or current abuse
- Recognising potential signs of abuse
- Initiating discussion if you have concerns about abuse
- Respecting an employee's choice on whether to accept support or not
- Responding sensitively to disclosure of abuse
- Encouraging and supporting your staff member to assess their level of risk and devise a safety plan in cases of domestic abuse
- Consider what work place support you could provide within the scope of current policy provision
- Encourage employees to access the [Employee Financial Support Service](#)
- Provide contact information of support organisations or agencies. **(see Appendix 2)**
- Agree arrangements for contact with the employee in the event that they are unexpectedly absent from work.

6.3 A range of workplace support that could be offered includes:

- [Four Pillars of Wellbeing Toolkit](#)
- Special paid leave for relevant appointments e.g. solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare and court appointments
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns – using existing policies such as the [Right to Request Flexible Working](#)
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- Redeployment or relocation where requested and where possible
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment e.g. change a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- Counselling services via our [Help Employee Assistance Programme](#)

7. FURTHER INFORMATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1 The implementation of this policy is accompanied by training via [My Learning](#)

7.2 This policy and guidance will be reviewed in conjunction with the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Team and the West Lothian Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership every five years, or earlier where there are changes in legislation, best practice or other organisation policies that impact on its effectiveness.

INDICATORS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Psychological indicators

- Changes in behaviour: may become quiet and withdrawn, avoid interaction, making acquaintances or friends at work; may always eat alone
- Uncharacteristic distraction, problems with concentration
- May cry at work or be very anxious
- Obsession with time
- May exhibit fearful behaviour such as startled reactions
- Fear of partner/references to anger
- Is seldom or never able to attend social events with colleagues
- Expresses fears about leaving children at home alone with partner
- Secretive regarding home life
- Appears to be isolated from friends and family

Physical indicators

- Repeated injuries such as bruises that are explained away; explanations for injuries that are inconsistent with the injuries displayed
- Frequent and/or sudden or unexpected medical problems/sickness absences
- Sleeping/eating disorders
- Substance use/dependence
- Depression/suicide attempts
- Fatigue
- Change in the way the employee dresses, e.g. excessive clothing in summer; unkempt or dishevelled appearance, change in the pattern or amount of make-up worn

Productivity indicators

- Persistently late without explanation; needing to leave work early
- Constraints on work schedule; employee may be dropped off and picked up from work and unable to attend work related events
- High absenteeism rate without explanation
- Needing regular time off for 'appointments'
- Changes in quality of work performance for unexplained reasons, e.g. may start missing deadlines and show additional performance difficulties despite a previously strong record
- Interruptions at work, e.g. repeated upsetting calls/texts/e-mails; Reluctance to turn off mobile phone at work
- Increased hours being worked for no apparent reason, e.g. very early arrival at work or working late

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

- [Abused Men in Scotland](#)
- [Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland](#)
- [Domestic and Sexual Assault Team \(DASAT\)](#)
- [Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre](#)
- [Fearless Domestic Abuse Service](#)
- [Forced Marriage Unit](#)
- [LGBT Domestic Abuse Scotland](#)
- [LGBT Youth – Domestic Abuse](#)
- [Men’s Advice Line](#)
- [Police Scotland – Domestic Abuse](#)
- [Samaritans](#)
- [Scotland’s Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](#)
- [Scottish Trans Alliance](#)
- [Scottish Women’s Rights Centre](#)
- [Shakti Women’s Aid](#)
- [Survivor Scotland](#)
- [Victim Support](#)
- [Wellbeing Scotland](#)
- [West Lothian’s Women Aid](#)
- [Women’s Support Project](#)