Domestic Abuse Policy Statement

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Next Review – August 2026

Introduction

Cumberland Council recognises that some of its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse. It may be as a survivor, someone who is currently living with domestic abuse; someone who has been impacted by a domestic abuse or someone who perpetrates domestic abuse.

It is the Council’s policy that every employee who is experiencing / has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that this will be treated sympathetically, sensitively, and, where possible, confidentially.

The Council has a ‘zero tolerance’ position on domestic abuse and is committed to ensuring that any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that they will receive support and assistance. We are committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is no room for violence or abuse, and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic abuse lies with the perpetrator. This policy statement also covers the approach we will take where an employee is a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

By developing an effective domestic abuse policy statement and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we will create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable. Domestic abuse has clear implications for the workforce, affecting attendance and presenteeism, staff turnover and mental wellbeing. It could also affect workplace teams, who may be caught up in a colleague’s distress or in supporting them to move on.

We recognise that domestic abuse has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. However, domestic abuse does effect men as well as women and it should also not be assumed that only a husband / male partner is a threat because abusers may include wives, relatives, and same-sex partners.

We undertake to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development. This policy statement will apply to all staff. This policy is part of Cumberland Council’s commitment to the welfare and safety of all staff.

Scope

This policy statement applies to staff across all sites, as well as agency and contract staff, all school-based staff for which there is no specific procedure laid down in national or local conditions of service. This policy statement is intended to be safety focussed and supportive of victims of domestic abuse.

Definition

The terms domestic violence and domestic abuse now tend to be used interchangeably. The Domestic Abuse Act defines domestic abuse and can be found here. In summary the definition of domestic abuse is:

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| “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:* physical
* sexual
* psychological
* financial / economic

Emotional Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.” The Home Office, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.Signs of domestic abuse are held at Appendix 2  |

Principles

We believe that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator.

We will treat every victim as an individual as everyone’s circumstances are different. Once a victim raises a concern about domestic abuse, they will be offered appropriate support and information on protection and help.

A survivor's experiences of domestic abuse may be compounded by racist reactions, isolation, language and cultural barriers or other reactions to age, sexuality, or disability. The same access to information and support should be available for everyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Assumptions about what action is appropriate will not be based on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Employees will be informed of their right to contact their trade union

Confidentiality

If an individual makes a disclosure that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they must be assured that the information they provide is confidential. Consent will be sought if information is to be shared and all relevant governance will be observed.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. This may occur when:

* There are concerns regarding children (for instance, if an employee gives information which suggests that their child or another child is at risk of abuse -whether physical, emotional, sexual or through neglect).
* If there is concern around vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of other employees, or
* If it is believed an employee and/or colleague(s) are at risk of serious injury or death.

In these circumstances, the individual should be informed of the reasons why confidentiality cannot be maintained.

Where there are concerns regarding children, the manager/supervisor needs to be satisfied that appropriate steps are being taken to protect children and if they are not satisfied, they must consider making a referral to Children’s Services.

If there is concern for a vulnerable adult’s safety, the manager/supervisor should inform the individual that they are seeking further advice from an appropriate agency such as the Council’s Safeguarding Adults Team or by completing a Safeguarding Adult Concern (SAC)

Managers have a duty to maintain a safe secure working environment for all employees and this could be made easier if colleagues are aware of potential risks as part of safety planning. The manager should advise the individual concerned fully what information they will be sharing with colleagues and confirm the basis for it.

Managers should remind employees that this information is confidential and any unauthorised breaches of this or improper disclosure of information could result in disciplinary action being taken. The consequences of breaching confidentiality could also have very serious consequences for the person experiencing domestic abuse.

It is important that the employee is made aware of the above at the beginning of any discussions.

Cumberland Council Commitment

Disclosure of abuse

Employees experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a variety of sources. This could include:

* Line manager/Headteacher
* Colleague
* Trade union representative
* Health Advocate
* Domestic Abuse Internal Champion
* HR

It is not their role to counsel victims, but they can offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

We will respond sympathetically, supportively, and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse. Managers should consult with the employee and consider what actions that they can make to support victims of domestic abuse this could include, but is not limited to:

* Temporary adaptations to the victim’s working patterns
* Using other existing policies (e.g. flexible working)
* Signpost and support Safety Planning (set out below)
* Paid time off to victims (see ‘Paid Time Off for Urgent Domestic Leave’ provisions of the Time Off work procedure) Signposting to counselling/support services

Safety planning

Research suggests 75% of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work; from threatening calls to harassment and arriving unannounced. We have a duty of care to all our employees and we will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, we will encourage employees to contact a specialist support agency or a member of staff who can undertake a DASH (Domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence) risk assessment. This should initially be completed by the individual taking disclosure.

The DASH risk Assessments which are currently used in Cumbria are attached at Appendix 1.

Accommodation for victims of domestic abuse is available via the services listed at Appendix 3. There is no eligibility criteria other than an individual needs to cite the are a victim of domestic abuse

Wider support services listed at Appendix 4. This poster can be printed for display.

If the victim and the perpetrator work in the same organisation

In cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the same organisation the Council will take appropriate action.

Action should be taken to ensure that the victim and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrators access to certain computer programmes or offices.

Training

We are committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings, or awareness raising sessions will be rolled out to ensure that all managers are able to:

* Identify the warning signs of domestic abuse
* Respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner
* Understand that the victim’s attitude to their domestic situation may vary over time
* Provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
* Discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning.
* Understand that a victim may be subject to abuse from another perpetrator after entering into a new relationship
* Signpost to internal and external sources of support.
* Understand that they are not counsellors.

**Role of colleagues**

We encourage all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of this statement.

**Perpetrators of domestic abuse**

The Code of Conduct and other appropriate Professional Codes inform staff of the standards of conduct expected of them. They identify principles governing behaviour by which employees are expected to abide. Employees are always expected to present high standards of personal integrity, honest, respect and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation both at work and also outside of work

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees or any allegation that an individual assisted an abuser in carrying out and/or perpetrating domestic abuse will be viewed as a potential breach of the Code of Conduct and will not be condoned under any circumstances.

In most cases, the matter will be investigated under the Council’s disciplinary procedure as potential gross misconduct which may, if proven, render the employee liable to dismissal without notice.

**Review**

This statement will be reviewed every three years unless there are changes in legislation, best practice, or other organisation policies impact on its effectiveness.

Should further clarification be required in relation to the consultation and / or implementation process please contact The Local Authority Domestic Abuse Coordinator.

Mary-Claire.Telford@cumberland.gov.uk (working on behalf of both Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils)

**APPENDIX 1**

**Assessing risk, DASH Risk Assessments and referral to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

Anyone who receives a disclosure of Domestic Abuse OR who has concerns based on professional Judgement MUST complete a DASH Risk Assessment

Please remember, you may hold a small piece of a jigsaw, which added to other pieces, may save someone’s life

We have 3 DASH Risk Assessments that have been adopted across Cumbria

Please use the most relevant one:

* General DASH- for those aged 16-59



* The older person’s DASH- for those aged 59+



* Potential Suicide DASH- for those experiencing MH issues



The relevant DASH should be completed via this link if referring to MARAC [MARAC Referral Form inc Standard RIC (office.com)](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?Host=Teams&lang=%7Blocale%7D&groupId=%7BgroupId%7D&tid=%7Btid%7D&teamsTheme=%7Btheme%7D&upn=%7Bupn%7D&id=LUGmfoeoQkmVHM1yKCexGkVmEY8vr0NKoWYoJACqOvpUNktRSVlZRUw1NlMwUVdHUlYzRkgwTjVaUy4u)

**What is MARAC?**

A MARAC is a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. This is a weekly meeting to discuss how to help victims at high-risk of murder/serious harm.

The meeting allows the sharing of information and resources between agencies and professionals. This allows agencies to volunteer specialist actions/support – which create multi-agency risk management action plans. Together the attendees write an action plan for each victim.

The MARAC enables agencies to work together and share resources.

A referral to MARAC should be made if:

* 14 YES ticks on the DASH Risk Assessment

OR

* Professional Judgement- Use your professional judgement in conjunction with the DASH risk indicators to assist in identifying and grading the risk.

If the DASH does not meet the threshold for MARAC, you should consider safety planning, referral to relevant agencies in order to best support the person.

Please remember- the DASH is a live document and should be completed with any increase or decrease in risk or every three months as good practice.

**Appendix 2**

**Signs someone might be experiencing Domestic Abuse**

**Work productivity signs**

* + - Change in the person’s working patterns, for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
		- Reduced quality and quantity of work, missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
		- Change in the use of the phone/email, for example a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
		- Spending an increased amount of hours at work for no reason

**Changes in behaviour or demeanour**

* + - Conduct out of character with previous employment history
		- Changes in behaviour, for example becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, depressed etc
		- Isolating themselves from colleagues
		- Obsession with timekeeping
		- Secretive regarding home life
		- Worried about leaving children at home with abuser

**Physical signs**

* + - Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations
		- Change in the pattern or amount of make up used
		- Change in the manner of dress, for example clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries
		- Substance use / misuse
		- Fatigue / sleep disorders

**Other signs**

* + - Partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace
		- Partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule
		- Flowers / gifts sent to employee for no apparent reason
		- Isolation from family / friends

**Appendix 3**

**Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Abuse- a quick guide**

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there is a duty to accommodate and support victims of Domestic Abuse, including children.

The aim is to stabilise the service user so they are in a position to move into permanent accommodation and recover from their experiences. Each person is allocated a Domestic Abuse Supported Accommodation Officer to act as a Lead Professional to bring in all required services including mentoring, life skills and therapeutic services.

In order to make a referral, please contact the relevant area, although those in need can present in any area.

**Copeland: e:** Homelessness3@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01946 59830024 hours

**Allerdale:** **e:** Homelessnes1@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01900 702660 office hours, 0300 373 3730 out of hours

**Carlisle: e:** Homelessness2@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01228 817428 office hours, 01228 817373 / 817386 out of hours

**Barrow: e:** dutytorefer1@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk **t:** 01229 876599 office hours, 01229 833311 out of hours

**Eden: e:** housingoptions@edenha.org.uk **e:** dutytorefer2@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk **t:** 01768 861499 office hours, 0800 0614232 out of hours

**South Lakeland: e:** homelessness@southlakeland.gov.uk**t:** 01539 793 199 office hours, 01229 833311out of hours

**Appendix 4 - Support Services**

**No one should suffer domestic abuse.**

**If you are at risk or experiencing abuse help and**

**support is available.**

**To report: Cumbria police non-emergency call 101 or online** [www.cumbria.police.uk/report-it](http://www.cumbria.police.uk/report-it)  **in an emergency**

**NATIONAL SERVICES**

**National LGBT Domestic Abuse Victims**

t: 0800 9995428

**Mankind Initiative**

t: 01823 334244 and Men’s Advice Line 0808 8010327

**24 Hour National Domestic Abuse**

Freephone helpline t: 01942 262 270

National Child Line t: 0800 1111

**LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Gateway 4 Women (Carlisle)**

**t:** 01228 212090

**e**: admin@cumbriagateway.co.uk

**Women Out West (Whitehaven)**

**t:** 01946 550103/ 07516 416040

e: wowadmin@ttcwestcumbria.org.

**Women Community Matters (Barrow)**

**t:** 01229 311102

**e**: reception@womenscommunitymatters.org

**Freedom Project (West Cumbria)** for women, men and children affected by Domestic Abuse

**t**: 01900 67167/ 07712 117986

**e:** admin@freedom-project-westcumbria.org.uk

**Springfield (South Lakeland)**

Women’s refuge support takes referrals Nation Wide. Community based support available for men, women & children

**t:** 01539 726171

e: refuge@springfieldsupport.org

Men, women & Children help@springfieldsupport.org

**Domestic Abuse Partnerships Emergency accommodation, in an emergency, please contact your local Borough Council. There is a Statutory Duty to accommodate victims of DA**

**Copeland: e:** Homelessness3@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01946 59830024 hours

**Allerdale:** **e:** Homelessnes1@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01900 702660 office hours, 0300 373 3730 out of hours

**Carlisle: e:** Homelessness2@cumberland.gov.uk **t:** 01228 817428 office hours, 01228 817373 / 817386 out of hours

**Barrow: e:** dutytorefer1@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk **t:** 01229 876599 office hours, 01229 833311 out of hours

**Eden: e:** housingoptions@edenha.org.uk **e:** dutytorefer2@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk **t:** 01768 861499 office hours, 0800 0614232 out of hours

**South Lakeland: e:** homelessness@southlakeland.gov.uk**t:** 01539 793 199 office hours, 01229 833311out of hours

Out of Hours 01229 833311

**The Domestic Abuse Alliance** brings together organisations working on the frontline of domestic abuse across the UK with the legal sector to deliver joined-up instant legal assistance and protection

They run the We Protect app. Via this app, victims of DA can get free, legal advice. Referrals can be made online via a one page form or via telephone **T: 0800 101 7110**

<https://domestic-abuse.co.uk>

**CUMBRIA WIDE SERVICES**

**Cumbria Victim Support**

**t**: 0300 3030 157 (local) Monday - Friday 9.00am - 6.00pm and 24/7 Support Line 0808 1689 111

**e:** cumbria.admin@victimsupport.org.uk

**Safety Net** for women, men and children affected by Domestic Abuse - County Wide Service

t: 01228 515859 <https://www.safetynetuk.org/make-a-referral>

**The Birchall Trust** for women, men and Children affected by Domestic Abuse - County Wide Service

<https://www.birchalltrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Referral-Form-Adult-21-22.docx>