

Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy – Key Changes (One-Page Summary)

What has materially changed

- Scope broadened: Draft covers employees, elected officials, contractors and service users (schools still excluded), whereas the old policy covered employees only.
- Legal alignment: Draft adopts Domestic Abuse Act 2021 definitions, explicitly recognising children as victims and including economic abuse; replaces earlier non-statutory definition.
- Equality statement strengthened: Wider list of protected and relevant characteristics and clearer inclusion commitments.
- Support model updated: Moves from two appointed contacts to trained Domestic Abuse Champions; adds structured training and clearer workplace safety adaptations (hours/location/entry routes/check-ins).
- Perpetrator management: Misconduct/gross-misconduct retained, plus operational safeguards (restrict access/change duties/separate work activities); explicit handling where both parties are Council employees; action where staff assist a perpetrator.
- Data protection & privacy: New GDPR/DPA 2018 records-management statement.
- Legal framework & signposting: Adds Health & Safety at Work Act duty and link to Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance.
- Statistics refreshed: Updates prevalence and local context figures; replaces older national statistics.
- Governance: Introduces version history, lead/owner and review date placeholders.

What stays the same

- Special/short-notice leave and consideration of flexible working, work location and hours to support attendance.
- Manager responsibilities: open culture, confidentiality (subject to safeguarding), use of the Domestic Abuse Discussion Checklist, and safeguarding escalation routes (including Medway contact).
- External support signposting remains (with internal roles updated to Champions).

What managers need to do

- Create a safe space for disclosure: be sympathetic and non-judgemental; do not investigate; use the Domestic Abuse Discussion Checklist (Appendix 4).
- Prioritise safety and safeguarding: if any child or vulnerable adult may be at risk, consult the Duty Manager via 01634 334466 and follow LADO/escalation routes.
- Maintain confidentiality except where safeguarding applies; record only what is necessary and store securely in line with GDPR/DPA.
- Provide practical support promptly: agree special/short-notice leave, consider flexible working and workplace adaptations (hours, location, entry routes, regular check-ins).
- Signpost and refer: connect the employee with Domestic Abuse Champions and Care First (0800 174319); share approved external support options.
- If the alleged perpetrator is also a Council employee, separate duties/workflows and restrict access to systems or locations as needed; liaise with HR on disciplinary steps; remind staff that assisting a perpetrator is misconduct.
- Keep a short log of agreed actions, target dates and review points; check in regularly and update the plan as risk or needs change.