



General Purposes Committee
20 January 2020

**Report from the Director of Legal,
HR, Audit and Investigations**

Domestic Abuse Policy

Wards Affected:	N/A
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Domestic Abuse Policy
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Martin Williams Head of Human Resources 028 8937 3209 Email: martin.williams@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce a Domestic Abuse Policy (attached as Appendix 1) for staff. The aim of this policy is to set out the support available to employees and provide advice and guidance to managers on the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace.
- 1.2 This policy is one of a number of standards required to achieve accreditation to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), which in turn will contribute to the achievement of the Borough Plan priority of a Borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy.
- 1.3 This policy will help to achieve our desired outcome to reduce the risk of harm in respect of domestic abuse to help make Brent safer.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the Domestic Abuse Policy.
- 2.2 The Committee is asked to note the following specific policy provisions:
 - 2.2.1 Review of Welfare Loans to include:
 - (a) Same day emergency loans for domestic abuse victims.
 - (b) The maximum loan for all purposes to be increased from £1000 to £5000. The amount loaned would not exceed the applicant's monthly net pay.
 - (c) All welfare loans to be interest free (interest is currently a fixed rate of 1% per annum above the current base rate of the Council's bankers.)

2.2.2 Special leave:

Consider requests for leave from domestic abuse victims to attend counselling, medical appointments or legal proceedings, moving house or re-organising childcare in line with other requests under the Special leave category.

2.2.3 Domestic Abuse Champion volunteers:

Recruitment of Domestic Abuse Champions as a confidential first point of contact for those experiencing domestic abuse.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Steering group was formed in 2019 and consists of representatives from Housing, Community Safety and HR.

3.2 The group is working towards achieving [DAHA accreditation](#), which recognises good practice and commitment in responding to domestic abuse. As part of the commitment to achieving the accreditation the group is reviewing the support provided to employees.

3.3 The purpose of the group is to ensure the council has the evidence of good practice, policies and procedures to meet the requirements for accreditation. There are eight standards – one of which is to have a Domestic Abuse policy for staff.

3.4 This policy aims to ensure that employees who may be suffering domestic abuse:

- a. Feel as safe and secure as possible whilst at work;
- b. Feel able to raise the issue with their manager, Human Resources, Trade Union representative or a Domestic Abuse Champion;
- c. Are readily able to access information on sources of advice and assistance;
- d. Have requests for special leave to resolve issues arising from the domestic abuse dealt with sympathetically

3.5 The DAHA accreditation assessment will take place in late March/early April 2020. As part of the assessment, the steering group will provide evidence that shows there is a procedure and policy to support domestic abuse victims, and there are Domestic Abuse Champions embedded within the council for staff to access.

3.6 One day Domestic Abuse Champions training scheduled for two dates in February 2020. The training will be provided by 'Advance,' the Domestic Abuse Support specialist.

3.7 The implementation of the policy will enable the Council to sign up to the GMB Union's 'Work to Stop Domestic Abuse' Charter.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 Costs of interest-free welfare loans recovered over a three-year period are charged to the department's budget. There is no financial impact of changing the interest rate on all welfare loans from base rate +1% to 0% because in practice interest has not been charged.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 Domestic Abuse can affect anyone irrespective of gender, sexuality, age, class, religion or ethnicity. An equalities analysis was completed for the Domestic Abuse Policy, this policy impacts positively on all protective characteristics.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 None.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

8.1 Included in the main body of the report.

Report sign off:

Debra Norman

Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations