

Gender Based Violence Guidance

Introduction

Perth & Kinross Council recognises that gender based violence is a cause and consequence of wider gender inequality and anyone can be a victim of gender-based violence, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background.

A gender-based violence incident is recorded every ten minutes in Scotland, with 64,807 reported in 2021-22. Women and girls are predominantly the victims; however, we do recognise that men and boys can also be victims of gender based violence and this guidance therefore applies equally to all employees regardless of gender including those who are in same sex relationship or who are transgender.

Scottish Context (21/22)	Female victim	Male victim	Male victim	Female victim	Not recorded (other)	Total
	Male perpetrator	Female perpetrator	Male perpetrator	Female perpetrator		
Total	38,869	7,402	812	879	16,845	64,807

Given the disproportionate impact on women and girls, gender based violence is one of the most sensitive indicators to of gender inequality and addressing this is therefore a necessary step in preventing gender-based violence both within and out with the workplace.

Definition of Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and family members and can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse and/or rape
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse
- 'Honour-based' violence

Domestic abuse is the most common form of gender based violence. It normally occurs within the context of an intimate relationship, or former relationship, and can include:

- Physical violence
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Withholding money
- Forced isolation
- The threat of outing someone due to their sexual orientation

Some employees may experience more than one form of violence, and some are inter-related, such as forced marriage and domestic abuse. There are some forms of violence listed above which employees are unlikely to experience, however, this policy takes cognisance of all forms of gender based violence.

Aims

The aims and objective of this guidance are;

- To assist and support employees who are or have experienced gender based violence.
- To support and enable employees who are experiencing gender based violence to remain at work.
- To assist and support managers to identify signs/symptoms of gender based violence and deal with this in an appropriate manner.
- To assist and support colleagues of employees who are or have experienced gender based violence.

Workplace impact

It is understood that, in some cases, threats and acts of gender based violence may carry over from an employee's personal life into the workplace but, even if this is not the case, gender based violence can affect an employee's work performance. Examples of how gender-based violence may manifest in the workplace can include:

- Poor timekeeping
- Increased sickness absence
- Poor performance
- Behavioural changes
- Physical - changes to appearance

Responsibilities

All employees of Perth & Kinross Council have a responsibility to ensure that their own behaviour does not constitute any form of gender based violence, to ensure workplaces are safe and to prevent and eradicate all forms of gender based violence as a result of employee action.

Line Managers have a crucial role in supporting employees who are or have experienced gender based violence. This includes;

- Listening and ensuring that all disclosures are taken seriously

- Reassuring employees their disclosure will be handled confidentially (*except for cases where there is reason to believe there may be risk or harm to children or vulnerable adults*)
- Providing support in the first instance, this can include signposting employees to external agencies or internal services such as counselling support
- Supporting the employee to remain at work for example offering practical ongoing support such as changes to working patterns
- Checking in regularly
- Considering the possible impact on other team members and checking in with them
- Seeking further advice and support from a Human Resources Officer
- Recognising the impact on their own wellbeing; supporting a team member experiencing gender-based violence can be an emotional experience and there is support available which can be requested e.g. from their own manager or accessed directly e.g. counselling support. Details can be found on Eric wellbeing pages

More information on how line managers can support team members can be found in the Equally Safe at Work [guidance for line manager document](#).

Colleagues also have an important role in supporting employees who are or have experienced gender based violence. This includes;

- Confidentially raising any concerns with line manager
- Supporting colleagues in an agreed way
- Understanding any reasonable adjustments that may be put in place to support the employee
- Recognising the impact on their own wellbeing; witnessing a colleague experiencing gender-based violence can be an emotional experience and there is support available which can be requested e.g. from a line manager or accessed directly e.g. counselling support. Details can be found on Eric wellbeing pages

Disclosing Gender Based Violence Experiences

We want to create an environment which encourages employees who are or have experienced gender based violence to seek support and advice and where everyone has the confidence to respond appropriately to colleagues, when such issues are raised.

It may be that an employee wants to discuss their situation informally in the first instance with a colleague or use the counselling service as a support and sounding board to prepare themselves to disclose to their manager.

When ready an employee should make their line manager aware of their situation. The discussion will be led by the employee and their line manager will respond with examples of support that can be put in place to assist the employee in the short and longer term both to address their personal situation and to support their attendance at work.

The decision to make Human Resources aware will be agreed between the employee and their line manager. There is no obligation to do so but Human Resources can offer advice and assistance to employees and managers to support them to apply this guidance.

We appreciate that this is a difficult experience for both the employee and the line manager. The Equally Safe at Work [Guidance for Line Managers](#) document can be useful for both when working through that initial and subsequent conversations.

Confidentiality

All information held will be kept strictly confidential, this will include any referral to professional agencies.

There will be no adverse impact on your employment records where you have disclosed domestic abuse to us either as a victim or survivor.

Support

We are committed to providing support for employees who are experiencing any form of gender based violence. Assisting and supporting employees to resolve difficulties in their personal life will in turn have a positive effect on their performance at work. Forms of support include :

The use of **Safe Leave** ([LINK](#))

“Employees who are victims of domestic abuse may be granted up to 3 days paid safe leave annually for reasons including but not limited to:

- Attending medical appointments and counselling;
- Attending legal proceedings;
- Seeking safe housing
- Visiting legal advisors or support agencies, for re-housing or re-organising childcare, or other relevant appointments; and
- Matters as a result of family violence

Safe leave may be taken as a block of up to 3 days or as intermittent periods of absence, based on the needs of the affected person.

The Council may request supporting documentation, such as from healthcare professionals, the police and/ or the relevant support agencies, as appropriate. Requests for safe leave and any information relating to the individual will be handled in the strictest confidence and retained securely in line with GDPR requirements.”

Flexible Working

The forms of flexible working that could be used will be dependent on the role however consideration could be given to requesting a change to working hours or workplace location or amending existing hybrid working arrangements e.g. to increase the time spent in the office.

Employee Assistance Programme

Employees who require support can contact the confidential [helpline](#) 24 hours a day (0800 023 9324) and, following an initial assessment call, they will be put in contact with a qualified counsellor.

[Self-Help Workbooks](#), easy read leaflets and self help audio books are also available with one specifically addressing domestic violence and also some of the consequences of this such as anxiety, panic and depression and low mood.

There is also [information](#) and a link to Bright Sky, a dedicated App offering advice and links to support for those experiencing domestic violence.

For Counselling appointments with external agencies including NHS appointments, employees would be granted reasonable paid time off work to attend as part of the Safe Leave provision.

Absence from Work

For advice on how to manage absence from work, please refer to the [Health and Wellbeing Framework](#) and/or Safe Leave (LINK) section of the Special Leave policy.

Financial Support

An employee experiencing financial difficulties due to gender based violence, can request an advance on their salary. Any request should be put in writing to their line manager, then approval will be sought from the Head of Service and Head of Finance.

Safety Planning

A safety plan can include making small changes in the workplace to support victim-survivors and prevent further victimisation. For more information on what can be included, please refer to the [Equally Safe at Work Guidance for Line Manager](#).

Further Information

For further support and advice can be located within the [Gender Related Wellbeing](#) section of the website or by contacting your Human Resource Officer.

For general enquiries on the guidance please contact hr@pkc.gov.uk

Perpetrators of Abuse

Disclosures or allegations regarding perpetrators of abuse who are employees can come from a variety of sources, these can include;

- Disclosure by the victim survivor
- Disclosure by the employee themselves
- Allegations from a colleague, service users, family member etc.
- Post-conviction notification from Police Scotland
- Pre-employment Checks (PVG)

Where a line manager receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse this must be highlighted immediately to Human Resources. Depending on the circumstances this may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Achieving and Maintaining Standards Policy or Disciplinary Procedure for Teachers and may result in a report to Child or Adult Protection Services.