

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Personnel Committee - 16 October 2019

Subject: Employment Policy - Domestic Abuse

Report of: Interim Director of HR & OD

Purpose of Report

This report presents to Personnel Committee a revised policy in relation to the Council's approach to supporting staff members who are subject to or affected by Domestic Abuse. The draft policy strengthens the organisational commitment to supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse and aligns this with the Council's 'Delivering Differently' Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy.

This revised document updates the existing policy agreed in 2016 to reflect changes in best practice and learning over the last three years. The refreshed policy has been developed in consultation with the Council's Community Safety Team.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to approve the implementation of the revised policy as detailed within and appended to this report.

Wards affected:

All

Financial implications for the revenue and capital budgets:

There are no financial consequences arising from the proposals within this report.

Contact Officers:

Name: Helen Grantham
Position: Interim Director of HR & OD
Telephone: 0161 600 8380
E-mail: helen.grantham@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Sam McVaigh
Position: Head of Workforce Strategy
Telephone: 0161 234 3976
E-mail: s.mcvaigh@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Samantha Mottershead
Position: HROD Officer
Telephone: 0161 600 8919
E-mail: s.mottershead@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Employee Domestic Abuse Policy: Personnel Committee 2 March 2016.

[Manchester's 'Delivering Differently' Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy](#)

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's existing Domestic Violence and Abuse policy was produced in March 2016 and has provided a solid framework to support employees who are affected by domestic abuse over the last three years. Over recent months work has taken place to review this policy in order to ensure that it is fit for purpose, aligns with best practice externally, takes into consideration feedback from employees and is aligned with the Council's own policy position in this area with regard to supporting Manchester residents. The revised policy has been developed in consultation with the relevant specialist teams across the Council.
- 1.2 Tackling domestic violence and abuse has been a key priority for Manchester for many years and as a city Manchester has had, and continues to have, a zero tolerance approach. Manchester believes that it is everyone's responsibility to stop domestic violence. In 2017/18, there were 8,174 incidents of domestic abuse recorded in Manchester with this figure increasing to 8,484 2018/19. - 'Delivering Differently' is Manchester's Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy (2016-2020) and in reviewing the Council's policy position in relation to employees here Officers have been cognisant of ensuring this aligns the Council as an exemplar employer with this approach.
- 1.3 Domestic abuse can have a devastating and long-term impact on the victim and can affect morale, health, wellbeing and self-confidence for many years into the future. Such abuse can have both direct and indirect workforce implications and, as a caring and supportive employer, it is the Council's responsibility to assist and support individuals who are impacted by domestic abuse. This duty of care extends also to those who are caring for or supporting family members or friends who are abuse victims.
- 1.4 The Council is committed to ensuring that any employee who experiences domestic abuse can raise the issue at work, without fear of stigmatisation or victimisation, and will receive appropriate support and assistance.
- 1.5 Furthermore it is important that the Council sets out a clear position in relation to employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse which balances a clear zero tolerance policy with the provision of advice and support regarding the appropriate services available.

2. Proposed Policy Revisions

- 2.1 Whilst the principles established in the previous Domestic Violence and Abuse policy are still sound, the revised policy amended reflects a number of changes to strengthen the Council's approach here. In summary these changes include:
 - **Expanding the definition of domestic abuse** - The definition within the policy has been developed to include stalking and harassment which reflects current best practice within comparable policies and aligns with the Council's own definition.

- **The Serious Crimes Act 2015** - This act has been referenced to ensure the policy is cognisant with all current legislation.
- **Clarify and strengthen our approach to the use of special leave** - The link between domestic abuse and the special leave policy has been strengthened to align the Council's position with identified best practice. Services are encouraged to authorise paid special leave to assist victims in making necessary arrangements and the policy makes clear that this support should be offered flexibly and freely and not only in exceptional circumstances.
- **Removal of monitoring form and introduction of managers checklist** - Following feedback from Managers, HR and the Community Safety Team and review against the requirements of GDPR the existing arrangement for a manager to log information on any disclosure of domestic abuse with HR has been revised. This has been replaced by an updated manager checklist and clear guidance on where, when and how any referral should be made where there are concerns about either an employee's safety or a third party.
- **Clear and unambiguous processes for supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and for employees who are perpetrators** - Whilst the policy position in this area has not changed substantively the language has been strengthened and clarified to ensure it is fully accessible.

2.2 In support of the revised Policy comprehensive guidance has been created to assist managers in supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. As well as user-friendly information on how to support employees in a range of different circumstances this guidance includes information and signposting to a range of relevant local and national support services. This guidance will evolve as feedback is received from managers and best practice emerges.

2.3 Over the coming weeks HR will continue to work with the Community Safety Team to develop and strengthen communication and training in relation to the revised Policy and supporting guidance.

3. Comments from Director of HROD

3.1 The revised policy and associated guidance provides an updated framework which will act to support employees to feel confident that they will be supported, should they experience domestic abuse. - The development of this policy demonstrates the Council's own commitment as an employer to supporting the principles of the City's Delivering Differently' Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy.

4. Comments from Trade Unions

4.1 To follow

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 A draft updated policy on domestic abuse is appended below. As noted above this has been developed reflective of the feedback received to strengthen the support available to employees who have or are experiencing domestic abuse. The policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 Members are asked to approve the appended domestic abuse policy.