Report to the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th December 2013

Workplace Domestic Violence Policy

Report Author: Catherine Fox
Job Title: Community Safety Officer – Domestic Violence Lead
Email: catherine.fox@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk
Telephone: (01782) 742238

Introduction

The Workplace Domestic Violence Policy is essential in raising awareness on this under reported crime and demonstrates to staff a commitment to their welfare by the Borough Council.

Background

Many of us spend a significant proportion of our lives at work, often some of the people who know us best are our colleagues and frequently know when something is wrong, yet all too often we may have concerns about colleagues which we don't act on. Furthermore, there is still a stigma around domestic violence, victim blaming and the fear of reporting, however the workplace could be a place where employees can access information and receive support safely.

Domestic Violence affects 1 in 4 women and 1in 6 men and claims the lives of 2 women a week in England every year and approximately 8 suicides per week due to the issues involving domestic violence. The term domestic violence covers a range of abuses which includes physical, psychological, sexual, financial, and emotional and they are used to control and/or coerce someone.

With such a high proportion of both women and men being the victims of domestic violence it is highly likely that we have both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence working within the Council.

Some of the effects that domestic violence can have on employees are increased sick days, stress, decreased productivity and absenteeism. Domestic violence costs the UK around £1.9 billion a year through lost economic output and this is for injuries sustained.

Research shows that 75% of domestic violence victims are targeted at work, 78% of male perpetrators of domestic violence use workplace resources to threaten and check up on their partners and 44% of convicted male perpetrators sent to a domestic violence programme have told someone about the abuse they have perpetrated.

Very often a victim won't know they are in an abusive relationship until it is too late, by raising awareness within the Council it may enable staff to realise earlier what they are experiencing and get help sooner.

Due to the amount of control a perpetrator has over his current or ex partner very often a victim wont have the ability to seek support even they wanted to, this could be due to lack of communication such as not having a mobile phone, being picked up and dropped off at work and having to account for all free time, therefore work can be the only real safe opportunity to get help, and the Council is developing a Domestic Violence Policy to provide support for its employees.

Questions to be Addressed

- Is there anything in the Policy that needs to be enhanced/amended?

- How best can the Policy be implemented at the Council?

- How can we cascade the information to staff at the Council?

- How will we deal with perpetrators?

Outcomes

- To give staff a greater awareness of what domestic violence is and break down the stigmas attached to it.

- To offer a safe environment for staff to get advice and help if they are in an abusive relationship.

Invited Partners/Stakeholders/Residents

Arch North Staffs

Conclusions

The workplace Domestic Violence Policy is essential in raising awareness on this under reported yet devastating crime.

It shows staff that the Borough Council will be supportive should they be in an abusive relationship and need to get help.

If employees who are victims of domestic violence can get the relevant assistance it may also provide efficiencies to the Borough.

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Cllr Tony Kearon, Safer Communities

Appendices

The workplace Domestic Violence Policy.