FALKIRK COUNCIL

WORKPLACE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE POLICY

September 2016
CONTENTS

PART 1 - STATEMENT

1.1 Purpose
1.2 Scope
1.3 Definition

PART 2 - PROCEDURE

2.1 Identifying possible GBV
2.2 Support/Process
2.2 Information and Training

PART 3 - IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities
3.2 Monitoring and Review
PART 1 – POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Purpose

Falkirk Council supports initiatives on gender based violence (GBV) and recognises the significant social, economic and psychological impacts this has in society.

The policy ensures Falkirk Council adopts a ‘reasonable adjustment’ approach towards employees’ who disclose that they are experiencing, or threatened with, any form of GBV.

Where any of our employees have perpetrated violence/abuse the Council will take all necessary steps to investigate these matters which may result in disciplinary action being taken.

As an employer we will make sure that our staff who are directly designing and providing services to people experiencing violence/abuse are knowledgeable and confident in delivering the necessary support and advice.

As a provider of services to our citizens we support a local Gender Based Violence Partnership which brings together Council Services, voluntary organisations and other public sector partners including Police Scotland and the NHS. The purpose of the partnership is to make sure our services are as effective and efficient as they can be for local people and ensure a consistent approach where possible is adopted.

1.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, agency workers and contractors using Council office space and resources.

It is recognised that violence/abuse can happen to men as well as women and that abuse may occur within any same sex or heterosexual relationship.

1.3 DEFINITION

Gender based violence includes a range of forms of violence which may affect workplace performance, including domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in public, stalking, commercial sexual exploitation such as prostitution, pornography and human trafficking, dowry related violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and so-called “honour” based violence.

Gender based violence not only impacts on personal well-being it is estimated that seventy-five per cent¹ of those experiencing violence/abuse are targeted at work and it is often possible for perpetrators to use workplace resources such as phones, email and other means to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partner.

Supporting employees who have experienced or are experiencing violence/abuse makes business sense. Not only will this be a reflection of good management practice but it helps address output lost due to decreased productivity, administrative difficulties from unplanned time off, lost wages and sick pay. Violence/abuse can cause employees to be distracted at work, arrive late, leave early or miss work, and can increase employee turnover.

The main aims of this policy are to:

- raise awareness on gender based violence;
- provide advice and guidance for Falkirk Council managers and Services;
- provide information on relevant training for Council Services;
- offer information and organisation contacts for individuals seeking personal help and support.

PART 2 – PROCEDURE

2.1 Identifying Possible GBV

Managers often become aware of changed behaviour at work from their employees and whilst this might not be an indicator of GBV an employee’s changed behaviour should trigger a discussion to find out why and what support the employee needs at work.

Behaviour indicators to trigger discussion might be:

- a drop in attendance
- failing behind on deadlines which previously would have been met
- uncharacteristic lateness / working late
- uncharacteristic behaviour towards colleagues etc.

Care and sensitivity from managers is needed and having the confidence to have difficult/sensitive conversations is a skill which can be supported by training from the Council’s Organisational Development team.

Where information comes to light that an employee is a perpetrator of GBV then the Council will reserve the right to take all necessary and relevant disciplinary steps should the behaviour outside work have an impact on their ability to meet their work obligations or where their actions could bring the Council into disrepute.

Any employee who is concerned about their behaviour towards a partner can be signposted to organisations which have the relevant support systems in place.

2.2 Support/Process

Where a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing GBV they should contact Human Resources for advice before any discussion takes place with the employee. Any discussion about the employee’s situation should take place in private and any questions should be asked with care and sensitivity. Employees should never be pressured into disclosing any personal information that they do not feel comfortable sharing.
Managers should appreciate how difficult it may be for an employee to discuss his/her personal circumstances and should always offer support in a non-judgemental fashion. They should also remember that, very often, signs of abuse will not be visible.

Where an employee alerts their manager to GBV, the manager should deal with this sensitively and consider what support mechanisms can be put in place.

The Council has a range of HR policies in place designed to support employees at work. Advice is available from HR to help managers identify the different ways employees can be supported in work. Without being prescriptive some reasonable adjustments that could be applied include:

- Special Leave - E.g. time off to seek legal advice re restraining orders;
- Flexible working - E.g. to vary working hours / or locations on a temporary basis;

A key consideration for managers will be personal safety and this could include arrangements such as:

- Encourage the employee to work out a personal and family safety plan which might include e.g. agreeing how to respond if the abusive partner contacts or visits the workplace;
- If the employee is unexpectedly absent from work communication with the line manager or an emergency workplace contact is agreed to support their safety.

2.3 Information and Training

This policy will be promoted in relevant Council newsletters and publications as well as being accessible through the Council’s intranet:

The Falkirk GBV Partnership provides training on Gender Based Violence and is available to managers and front line Council employees (see 3.1.2 below).

In line with Equally Safe, Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (published in 2014), the Council recognises that services such as education, social work and housing need to be competent in identifying and responding effectively to violence and abuse.
PART 3 – IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1.1 ROLE OF MANAGERS

Line managers have a responsibility to support employees and ensure a sensitive and consistent approach when dealing with matters of GBV.

Discussions between a manager and an employee who is experiencing GBV will be treated in confidence. However, in some circumstances this confidence may need to be broken in order to protect children or vulnerable adults. Managers should always discuss these matters with Human Resources in the first instance.

Where necessary, managers can seek support from Human Resources.

3.1.2 ROLE OF THE FALKIRK GBV PARTNERSHIP

Falkirk Gender Based Partnership is a forum which represents Council Services, partners including Police Scotland, Forth Valley NHS and local voluntary organisations. Within this group there is a wide range of expertise which employees can access individually and independently. All contacts will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The Partnership’s main objectives are:-

1. to raise awareness of GBV issues,
   • the Partnership Co-ordinator delivers training on domestic abuse and other forms of GBV to front line Council services and employees
2. to identify and share examples of good practice,
3. to identify opportunities for working together,
4. to identify gaps in service provision,
5. to report on and respond to national and local issues and
6. to develop services which effectively meet the needs of women, men, children and young people experiencing, or who have experienced, all forms of GBV in the Falkirk area.

3.2 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Head of Human Resources & Business Transformation will review this policy as per the agreed Human Resources Policy Review timetable in conjunction with Service Directors/ Chief Officers and Trade Unions taking into consideration legislative amendments and best practice advice.

This Policy has been Equality Impact Assessed and no adverse impact has been identified.