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**To: Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board**

**On: 14 January 2020**

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**Report by: Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services**

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**Heading: Renfrewshire Council – Domestic Abuse Policy Training**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board approved the Renfrewshire Council – Domestic Abuse Policy on 13 November 2019.
  - 1.2 Domestic Abuse – and in particular, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which support and safeguard the highest risk victims of domestic abuse, are coordinated by the Communities and Public Protection service working alongside the Gender Based Violence Working Group and Strategy.
  - 1.3 The roll out of the agreed Domestic Abuse Policy will be supported by training and awareness raising for employees and managers across the Council which builds on the programme of training and awareness carried out for key employees and partners over the past 2 years.
  - 1.4 As well as safeguarding Renfrewshire Council employees, training has also been carried out in 2019 across Renfrewshire to partners and other organisations including:
    - NHS
    - Police Scotland
    - Front Line Staff eg Housing Officers
    - Job Centres
  - 1.5 The Renfrewshire Council Domestic Abuse Policy for employees can be found at - [http://intranet.renfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10839/Domestic-Abuse-Policy/pdf/DA\\_Policy\\_20191.pdf?m=1574697134823](http://intranet.renfrewshire.gov.uk/media/10839/Domestic-Abuse-Policy/pdf/DA_Policy_20191.pdf?m=1574697134823)
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board:
- (i) agrees the role out of domestic abuse awareness training to all staff and partners coordinated by Communities and Public Protection as set out in section 4 of this report.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council strives to create a working environment and culture that is supportive, where the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees is a key priority.
- 3.2 Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on individuals and their families and the Council is committed to a zero-tolerance approach, supporting both employees and service users who are impacted by domestic abuse. 75% of those who suffer domestic abuse also suffer at work and those experiencing domestic abuse may feel trapped and helpless (Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence and Eliminate Domestic Violence Global Foundation). The true impact can be easily hidden, and individuals often do not want to admit or share their experiences because they feel shame or some responsibility for the situation.
- 3.3 The Council signed up to the 'Make a Stand Pledge' that was launched in September 2018 and centres around four commitments:
- Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse;
  - Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on Renfrewshire's website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff;
  - Put in place an HR Policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse;
  - Appoint a champion at a senior level in the organisation to own activity you are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse.
- 3.4 The new HR policy fulfils one of these commitments, includes information about the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 that came into force in Scotland on 1 April 2019 and compliments the Council's zero tolerance statement of intent around domestic abuse implemented in November 2018.
- 3.5 The key areas included in the policy are:
- Support for all Council employees including Teaching staff
  - Legislative protections provided by the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

- Guidance for managers and employees to help recognise, respond and support employees impacted by domestic abuse;
  - An increase in paid 'Safe Leave' provisions.
- 3.6 'Safe Leave' may now be requested to attend medical appointments and counselling, support legal proceedings, seek safe housing, visit support agencies, organise childcare and liaise with the Police and other support organisations. As part of the policy, Renfrewshire Council proposes to increase the current provision of up to 2 days paid special leave per annum to 'up to 10 days paid Safe Leave per annum' (pro-rated).
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#### **4. Domestic Abuse Training in Renfrewshire**

- 4.1 To compliment the implementation of the policy, awareness training for managers, employees and HR & OD will commence from January 2020, including the development of an e-learning package by the Domestic Abuse Working Group, in partnership with 'SafeLives'.
- 4.2 In addition to this Renfrewshire Council Community Protection service is working closely with SafeLives to roll out a programme of ongoing and comprehensive training across the local authority area to raise awareness of domestic abuse more generally and support the implementation of the recently approved HR Policy.
- 4.3 The programme builds on the training undertaken during 2019 where the Tasking and Deployment Manager has been leading on the provision of Domestic Abuse Training to key front-line staff including Housing Officers, Health Practitioners, Family Nurses and Community Mental Health Teams. During 2020, bespoke and targeted training is continuing and expanding into the community with training being delivered to all Job Centres within Renfrewshire. This will ensure front line staff are able to assist and identify the signs of anyone potentially suffering from domestic abuse.
- 4.4 In addition to this, bespoke training is being developed for Adult Social Workers and this will be delivered in partnership with Woman's Aid into 2020 alongside the training of A & E staff.
- 4.5 Renfrewshire Council are also assisting SafeLives in rolling out training to over 14,000 Police Officers with regards to coercive control training following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018.
- 4.6 Finally, an electronic learning training course is being designed by Renfrewshire Council, in conjunction with SafeLives, to be added to the Council "i-learn" system. This will allow any member of staff to access and undertake the training required to identify the signs of domestic abuse and more importantly what they can do to assist. This package will run alongside the ongoing bespoke training of individual groups of staff and professional officers.
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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - Depending on requests, there may be a potential increase in costs for paid time off for employees experiencing domestic abuse to access appropriate support and care. This will be monitored closely.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - HR & OD will provide advice, guidance and training to managers and employees on the interpretation and application of the policy.
3. **Community/Council Planning –**
  - *Our Renfrewshire is safe* - By targeting domestic abuse within Renfrewshire Council, the Council are ensuring members of staff and their families are safe.
4. **Legal** - The Council will meet its legislative and best practice requirements.
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**
  - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - The Domestic Abuse Policy will help to support good health and wellbeing and create a supportive and safe working environment and culture.
9. **Procurement** - None
10. **Risk** - None
11. **Privacy Impact** - None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not Applicable
13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable

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## List of Background Papers

None

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