

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY & PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 APRIL 2023	REPORT NO:	CFO/007/23
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER PHIL GARRIGAN		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	NICK MERNOCK	REPORT AUTHOR:	AMANDA CROSS
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	MIKE PILKINGTON, PAUL BLANCHARD FLETT STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY UPDATE		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A APPENDIX B	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY EIA
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Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the changes made to the Domestic Violence Policy which takes into account the Home Office Domestic Abuse Statutory Guide, the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members agree the revised Domestic Violence Policy.

Introduction and Background

3. Merseyside Fire and rescue Authority first implemented a domestic violence policy in March 2008. While the policy has been managed and reviewed since its initial incorporation the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has impacted the requirement for more significant changes into the Policy.
4. The legislation has also extended the ways that a person maybe domestically abused to reflect cyber stalking and honour crimes.
5. The revised policy is more explicit on the stance Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) will take with employees being investigated for gross misconduct and why this is different from the tests a Police Force and/or the CPS are required to meet.
6. The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance also details how domestic abuse can manifest itself for each protected characteristic and this has informed the updated EIA.
7. The revised policy also references the duty placed upon the Authority as part of the Serious Violence Duty which came into effect on 31st January 2023.

Equality and Diversity Implications

8. The accompanying EIA was developed from the statistics, narrative and case studies in the Statutory Guide. Whilst the Guide covers situations outside the scope of MFRA it has provided an informative data set for the EIA.
9. The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance outlines how anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sex, gender reassignment, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background.
10. Domestic abuse does not always have to be physical to be prosecuted - sometimes victims may not even be aware it is happening. It can include any behaviour deployed by an offender to obtain control or power over another, and we recognise that emotional abuse can be just as harmful as physical violence.

Staff Implications

11. Employees should feel that work can be a safe place for them and that their managers will provide support and guidance for them should they need it.

Training Implications

12. A suitable training or awareness programme will be utilised to update staff on the changes to the policy and the support available to them.

Legal Implications

13. Employees alleged to have committed an act of domestic violence will be managed using the Authority's agreed Conduct Procedure. This does not need to wait until any police or judicial processes are completed.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

14. The Authority will act to support an employee to remain in work rather than absent themselves. There may be occasions where the employee may need to meet Police or legal representatives and work premises may be a safe space to undertake these.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

15. All employees are covered under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which includes a person's physical as well as mental wellbeing.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Authority in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

16. MFRA's fire stations are Safe Havens and third-party reporting centres. The Authority does not tolerate hate in any form and supports the white ribbon campaign which works to reduce violence to women and girls.
17. This policy update reinforces the support we will provide to our own employees as well as members of the public.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRA Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
EIA Equality Impact Assessment