



MANAGERS' GUIDANCE – SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE WHILST WORKING FROM HOME DUE TO COVID-19

Background

National helplines supporting victims of domestic abuse have experienced a sharp increase in the number of calls they are receiving during the current lockdown arrangements. With a large percentage of the workforce across the country working from home, victims of domestic abuse are potentially in lockdown with their abuser 24 hours per day, without the respite that they would normally have in terms of attending work and/or the abuser attending work outwith the home.

The Home Secretary has recognised this increased risk, and has launched the 'You Are Not Alone' campaign to raise awareness and provide additional support to people in this position.

The UK and Scottish Governments and the Police have made it clear that any travel in connection to assisting someone to escape from an abusive situation is regarded as essential travel, and is allowed under the terms of the lockdown restrictions.

As an employer, ACC has a duty of care towards employees, and in these unprecedented circumstances, this duty of care extends to supporting all ACC employees to stay safe at home. With this in mind, a guidance document has been produced signposting the various agencies available to support people facing the possibility of domestic abuse. This guidance is available here: **INSERT LINK**

Your Role as a Manager

As a line manager, you can play a critical role in supporting employees to stay safe. This document provides details of the steps you can take to support members of your team, and guidance on how to respond to an employee signaling that they need help.

Please familiarise yourself with the “Ask for Angela” process set out below so that you can respond appropriately to a call for help.

This is a difficult and sensitive area, and one that you may not feel confident about supporting; it can also be upsetting to realise that a colleague is in this position. If you feel that you need additional support, please contact the Employee Relations team on EmployeeRelations@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Setting the Scene

In order to ensure that employees have the opportunity to signal that they require help, there are a few things you should do:

- Ensure that you are regularly in contact with all members of your team, including those who are not currently working (for example on special leave, shielding, self isolating etc)
- Accommodate any requests for daily check-ins with any team members. In the employee guidance, this is given as an option to employees so that they know that they will have an opportunity to seek help on a daily basis if required

- If the employee prefers to use a signal statement other than the one set out in the Ask For Angela process (set out below), agree what statement the employee will use to alert you to the fact that they need assistance. The statement should be something that would crop up naturally in a conversation between you and the employee, but still be recognisable as a call for help
- If the employee wishes, agree the action you will take should they use the signal statement. This could be contacting a relative for them or contacting the police.
- Encourage employees to ensure their contact details including their chosen Next of Kin details are up to date (alternatively if Next of Kin is the abuser, the individual can add emergency contact details into the comments box)

Ask For Angela

The Ask for Angela campaign is a national campaign originally set up so that anybody who feels that they are any risk of harm during a night out can approach a staff member in a bar or club and ask for Angela. This signals to the member of the staff that the person is in need of help, and the staff will ensure that they can exit the premises in safety.

As this campaign is likely to be known by a wide range of people, and given that Angela is a name that would naturally crop up in conversations involving ACC staff, as the name of the Chief Executive, we have adopted this as the default signal statement for employees to use to indicate that they need help without arousing the suspicions of an abuser who might overhear the conversation.

The attached flowchart shows the steps to follow should an employee signal that they need help.

The signal statement chosen is **Is Angela In/Available Today?** There may be circumstances in which an employee prefers to use an alternative statement as a signal, for example where the abuser is also an employee of ACC who would be aware of the guidance and would potentially recognise the signal. In such circumstances, as set out above, an alternative statement can be agreed.

It is important to remember that all you can do is offer support, a listening ear and help facilitate the employee leaving their abuser by offering a reason for leaving the house or by making contact with the Police, a friend or relative or support agency who can assist. It is the employee's decision whether or not to leave an abusive situation – you cannot be, and are not, responsible for providing the type of specialist advice that support agencies can provide; nor are you responsible for the decisions made by the employee.

ASK FOR ANGELA PROCESS

Employee uses signal statement to indicate help is needed
(Is Angela in/available today, or other agreed statement)

↓
Invite employee to meet you at an ACC building (Please contact Employee Relations on 01224-01224 52 3937 or e-mailing employeerelations@aberdeencity.gov.uk if you unsure which buildings you can access.)

Employee accepts invitation

↓
Meet employee as arranged*

↓
Assist employee to contact
Police, relative or other
Support agency

Employee declines invitation

↓
Ask a series of closed questions:

Are you safe?

Do you want me to call the police?

Would you like me to contact someone else?*

↓
Make contact as indicated by
employee

*it is recommended that for your own safety, you arrange for a colleague to accompany you to the meeting.

** then a list of possible suggestions, next of kin, emergency contact listed in comments box of CoreHR, work colleague, alternative manager.