



Work to Stop Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy





Guide/Model Domestic Abuse Policy for the Workplace

Being a good employer recognises the shared responsibility to support staff through new or difficult periods in their lives. Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on individuals and their families. People experiencing domestic abuse are often subject to disciplinary action or job losses, often through no fault of their own. An understanding and effective workplace policy to deal with the impact of domestic abuse will build a more nurturing and safer working environment for all staff, encouraging greater staff retention and importantly economic independence for those individuals living with or fleeing domestic abuse.

Our Pledge

As an organisation/INSERT ORG NAME we are committed to the Work to Stop Domestic Abuse campaign. We/INSERT ORG NAME fully recognise that for many people, the workplace is not just a vital source of independent income but can also be a source of support, which enables staff to be safe at home and at work.

Everyone has a responsibility to end domestic abuse and as an organisation, we will commit to the following actions:

- Train managers how to best support staff members experiencing domestic abuse
- Ensure that all staff have access to the domestic abuse in the workplace [toolkit](#)
- Every staff member will have access to our workplace policy and we will actively take steps to ensure it is adhered to
- Commit to reviewing and monitoring this policy on a regular basis
- Display domestic abuse national and local support/advice in workplaces across the organisation
- Sign up to GMB Union's 'Work to Stop Domestic Abuse' Charter.

Defining Domestic Abuse

Anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background - this is true for both the abuser and the abused.

Different kinds of abuse can happen in different contexts. The most prevalent type of domestic abuse occurs in relationships, but the definition of domestic abuse also covers abuse between family members, such as adolescent to parent violence and abuse.

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Verbal
- Financial
- Emotional

1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in the UK have endured in their lifetime. Two women each week and one man each month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner.

Protection in the Workplace

In order for the Work to Stop Domestic Abuse policy to be effective, employers must also be complying with existing legislation to protect all staff and ensure that this extends to wherever the workplace may be.

Health and safety laws are designed to ensure that workers have the right to work in a safe environment where risks to health and wellbeing are considered and dealt with effectively.

There are four key areas of health and safety legislation in the workplace relevant to domestic abuse:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996

Management Responsibilities

Managers across (INSERT ORG NAME) should ensure that the Work to Stop Domestic Abuse policy is carried out by the following actions:

- where possible working environments, particularly of front line services, are flexible and adaptable to the needs of people experiencing domestic abuse;
- staff at reception points are conscious of and responsive to these needs which will include personal safety, the potential time constraints they may face, enhanced needs in respect of confidentiality and appropriateness of services in terms of gender, ethnic background, religion, age, disability, sexuality and language;
- procedures are pre-planned to deal with emergencies, for example the ability to access crisis funds, transport arrangements and local networking to maximise support;
- the policy and information about services available to employees experiencing domestic abuse are displayed in prominent areas.

Managers with responsibility for staff should carry out additional steps, including but not limited to ensuring:

- staff are familiar with, and act in accordance with this guidance and the Domestic Abuse Policy
- all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this guidance and policy, and particularly with regard to security of information and safety of victims including children;
- all staff are aware that abusers may go to great lengths to find the person(s) who they are in an abusive relationship with. Information that identifies or locates people who are fleeing abusive relationships, or information which locates refuge provision, must not under any circumstances be passed on in a way which can increase risk;
- all key staff are aware that when a young person is subject to domestic abuse from an adult perpetrator;
- key staff working with those experiencing domestic abuse are adequately trained and given appropriate support and supervision in their work and the risks to staff are minimised;



- all staff working with children are aware of child protection procedures on domestic abuse;
- information about potentially unsafe environments and circumstances is communicated to any member of staff who may be exposed to that situation;
- all staff are aware of policies and procedures relating to safety of staff while at work;
- members of staff experiencing domestic abuse (both abused and abusers/potential abusers) are dealt with sensitively and informed about options in respect of support services and working conditions available to them.

[Managers also need to be aware that action may be needed for someone who is 16 or 17 years old who discloses domestic abuse (who may be undertaking work experience placements or an apprenticeship). Child protection procedures also need to be considered in those circumstances.] *Relevant for workplaces that deal with children and young people.*

Important Responses

It is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential.

Even if managers disagree with the decisions being made regarding an employee's relationship, it is important to understand that those in abusive relationships may make a number of attempts to leave their situation, before they are finally able to do so.

Managers also need to be aware that the abused staff member is most at risk of life threatening or fatal abuse when they are attempting to leave or have recently left an abusive or violent partner.

This is why it is so important to believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse. Never ask for proof or dismiss reports or use judgemental language - such as 'why don't you just leave? Or, why haven't you told anyone before?'

Allow them time and somewhere quiet/private to speak with you and be prepared that this will be an upsetting conversation.

Reassure the employee that (EMPLOYER) has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.



Working with the employee, take necessary steps to ensure the safety and needs of the employee are met - these steps may include but are not limited to:

- Reasonable changes to working times and patterns,
- Changes to specific duties which would help to keep the employee safe,
- Relocation to a different work area or team,
- Divert phone calls, email messages and look to change a phone extensions or numbers if an employee is receiving harassing calls,
- Ensure next of kin details are up to date and inform HR of any necessary changes,
- Check that staff have arrangements for getting to and from work safely,
- If possible and if necessary, relieve the staff member from public facing or visible roles,
- Use existing flexible working policies to assist with relevant appointments, for example, with support agencies, solicitors, childcare, housing and court.
- A more detailed checklist is provided in the [BITC/Public Health England Domestic Abuse Toolkit](#)

Proactively Dealing with Abusive Employees

Employers have a duty of care for all their staff - including perpetrators of abuse, who are harming themselves as well as the lives of others. Supporting a perpetrator to stop or seek help does not excuse or condone abuse and is an important step to help provide a safe working environment for all and protect the lives of those experiencing abuse now and in the future. However, it should be made clear to all employees that acts of verbal or physical or domestic abuse by employees of (INSERT ORG NAME) on or off duty, and outside of work, are unacceptable.

Please refer to the [BITC/Public Health England Domestic Abuse Toolkit](#) for spotting the signs and how to deal with perpetrators of abuse in the workplace.

When dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse, whether they have self-referred or it has been reported, it is vital that managers must ensure that their own safety is never compromised.

Spotting the Signs of Domestic Abuse

The signs of domestic abuse can show itself in many different ways. It is important to understand that the prevalence and type of abuse as well as the barriers to getting the necessary support, can vary depending on ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability or even pregnancy.

As outlined by Public Health England, an employee experiencing domestic abuse could display the following:

- A change in working pattern - such as absences or frequent lateness,
- Missing deadlines or a reduction in the quality/quantity of work in general,
- A large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- Pending an increased number of hours at work for no reason
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may indicate coercive control
- Conduct out of character with previous behaviour
- Changes in behaviour: for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, or depressed
- Being isolated from colleagues
- Obsession with leaving work on time
- Worried about leaving children at home
- Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations
- Change in the pattern or amount of makeup used
- Change in the manner of dress: for example, clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries
- Partner or ex-partner stalking employee in or around the workplace or on social media
- Partner or ex-partner exerting unusual amount of control or demands over work schedule
- Isolation from family/friends

Confidentiality and record keeping

(INSERT ORG NAME) respects an employee's right to confidentiality. All managers are reminded that our colleagues personal information should not be released to other parties: this includes home telephone numbers, shift patterns and addresses.



All records concerning domestic abuse should be kept strictly confidential. No local records should be kept of absences relating to domestic abuse and there should be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse.

Support, additional information and resources

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge. Freephone: 0808 2000 247

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

ManKind: advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse. Helpline (weekdays 10am-4pm) 01823 334244

www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims

Respect: provide a confidential helpline, email and webchat service for perpetrators of domestic violence looking for help to stop. They help male and female perpetrators, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Partners or ex-partners of perpetrators, as well as concerned friends and family members and Frontline Workers are also welcome to contact us for information, advice and support. 0808 802 40400 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

<http://respect.uk.net/information-support/domestic-violence-perpetrators/>

If you or your staff members are in immediate danger - please call 999.