

Eliminating Domestic Abuse

ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS
2017 - 2018



In support of

HeForShe

UN Women Solidarity Movement
for Gender Equality



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The impact of domestic abuse rarely stays at home. Figures from Public Health England show that 75% of those who experienced domestic violence were targeted at work. In total, domestic abuse costs UK businesses £2.7 billion every year. 80% of those who had experienced domestic abuse reported feeling distracted, tired and unwell at work, and 56% had to take time off work. Despite this, 4 out of 5 women we surveyed stated their workplaces had no policies or procedures in place to support them.

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Mary Mason
CEO Solace Women's Aid

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I think the issue of domestic abuse is absolutely critical because if you learn, as a young person, violence and abuse in the home then they become a part of your world. Everything we know about the world says that violence begets violence so violence in the home is at the heart of violence itself.

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Kate Robertson
Founder of One Young World

Why should you be concerned as an employer?

1 To create a culture of trust and transparency with your employees

For an employee to tell their manager that they are experiencing domestic abuse might seem like the end of their career

2 To prevent drops in productivity and presenteeism

Of the £2.7 billion that the UK loses in economic output due to domestic abuse, £1.3 billion per year is absorbed by employers⁸

3 To raise awareness and dispel myths of who experiences abuse

Domestic abuse really can affect anyone; even those who appear to have it all

Gender Equality and Eliminating Domestic Abuse



"Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act"

Ban Ki-moon,
Former UN Secretary-General

A corporate policy addressing domestic abuse and the impact it has on your workforce will complement initiatives addressing gender equality.

UN Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. An important part of that is tackling the financial, emotional, physical and sexual abuse experienced by women and men in their own homes. Sadly, it is women who disproportionately suffer from domestic abuse, especially in developing countries, but men do also experience abuse. Furthermore, the stereotype of the aggressive male abuser also de-humanises and demonises men.

Silence or brushing it under the carpet is no longer an option.

We need proactive approaches that focus on prevention and early-stage intervention thus reducing the cases that reach crisis-point.

We need a concerted effort from individuals, communities, businesses, policy-makers and governments to educate themselves and engage with the campaign to eliminate domestic violence. Gender equality is a winner for everyone and hopefully this document shows that **the work to eliminate domestic violence is a crucial part of achieving equality for all.**

Definition of Domestic Abuse

“Any instance or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”

Domestic Abuse: A Complex Issue

emotional & psychological	financial	physical	sexual
Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth or self-esteem, this may well impact the mind and mental health ⁹	Subtle or overt attempts to limit the partner's access to assets or conceal information and accessibility to personal finances ¹⁰	Violent assault which may result in injury ¹¹	Any situation in which an individual is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity ¹²
When someone constantly puts you down or criticises you, threatens to stop you from seeing your children, or threatens to commit suicide if you leave the relationship.	When your partner or another family member takes control of your financial affairs when you don't want them to, or prevents you from having access to money.	When someone harms you by hitting, pushing, throwing objects or driving dangerously. This also includes threats to harm you, other people or pets.	When your partner makes you do sexual things that you haven't given consent for. You may not be capable of giving consent, for instance because you are too young, drunk or high on drugs. Consent cannot be given by omission.

These definitions and examples are by no means an exhaustive list; abuse can take many forms.
For more information please visit our partner charitystandtall.org



£2.7 Billion

the lost economic output
caused by domestic
abuse in the UK every year¹

This issue affects the bottom line. Employees experiencing abuse at home are unlikely to feel comfortable telling their line managers or HR. However, **it will impact their work.**

For instance, an employee may display reduced confidence, energy, productivity, attention and focus. They may require time off to recover from domestic disputes leading to disruption to the wider team dynamics.

Domestic abuse equates to loss of output.

Long term sickness relating to the consequences of abuse on mental and physical health leads to loss of resource and costs the company in the form of statutory sick pay and loss of output. Sustained over a long period of time, this can cause people to lose their jobs or miss promotions which means the company loses talent and

Corporate organisations should recognise that

domestic a b u s e happens

and will impact the workplace.

We propose **putting a policy in place** so that employers can show they are aware of the issue and have the capacity to support people in their organisation who are experiencing or recovering from abuse.



1 in 3 women²



1 in 6 men³
experienced
domestic
abuse

Employers have an opportunity to ensure a message of 'zero tolerance' regarding domestic abuse. The welfare of staff is nearly always one of the top priorities for leaders in an organisation.

68% of victims of domestic abuse are more likely to experience depression⁴

58% of abused women miss at least 3 days of work a month⁵

16% of men are affected by domestic abuse during their adult lifetimes⁶

75% of victims received abuse from their perpetrator whilst at work⁷

This document aims to assist you in creating a culture of openness where the signs of abuse are not ignored. As a result, an employee who is experiencing or recovering from abuse will feel able to speak about and proactively manage the impact at work. This will no doubt result in a more effective recovery, both personally and professionally.

Employers' Duty of Care



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I didn't realise it was our problem, too. I thought if it was a domestic problem, it was none of our business. I learned domestic abuse follows the victim to work.

”

HR manager

Employers have a duty of care to ensure workers are operating in a safe environment where risks to health and well-being are considered and dealt with efficiently.

There are simple steps that can be taken to respond to this sensitive issue. For instance, establishing a policy, creating clear procedures, sharing resources and insisting on a zero-tolerance culture is not only good business but it could save a life.

Facilitating conversations, providing tips for managers on how to support an employee and putting appropriate signposts in place could make a huge difference.

"I started working for an independent language school as the Centre Manager on a rolling contract. He was extremely jealous to the point of absurdity and would **make me drive to his work at lunchtime as he didn't want me to spend the time with my only colleague, who was a man. One time, he noticed the top button of my shirt was undone and asked if I had shagged my colleague during lunch. There was an evening where he became so convinced that I was lying to him that he started to strangle me.** I thought he was deeply troubled, that only my one could fix him and by accepting his apology, I was showing him how much I loved him."

"The physical violence increased tenfold. He regularly **hit me in the face and all over my body. He pushed me, choked me, kicked me and spat at me. He broke my toe and perforated my eardrum.** After he was violent, he often forced me to have sex with him to make things "ok" again."

"To cover my bruises I borrowed a **long-sleeved uniform** from a colleague and wore **heavy make-up.** If I couldn't cover it up, **I took sick days which resulted in disciplinary meetings."**

"Leaving was one of the hardest things I have done, but over the last three and a half years I have restarted my life. I have an amazing job at a pharmaceutical company, have made new friends, sorted out the divorce, reconnected with my family and met a loving and respectful man who is also my best friend. I suffered from panic attacks, PTSD, nightmares, spent ten months on antidepressants and still can't watch anything violent on TV. I have been having EMDR treatment for trauma and sought counselling. **I have, through all of this, claimed my life back: I feel unstoppable now"**

Domestic abuse survivor

To hear the full story listen to our podcast with the survivor.

An organisational commitment to...

**understand
domestic abuse
and the risks
and
consequences in
the workplace**

**fully support
colleagues which
may include
practical measures
such as diverting
calls or alerting
reception**

**engage with
local Community
Safety Partnerships
and specialist
charities**

**encourage
sympathetic,
non-judgemental
and confidential
conversations**

**review and update
other policies,
procedures and
practices that are
linked**

**establish the
responsibility of
managers to encourage
the disclosure, facilitate
discussion, identify
appropriate support and
record incidents that
occur at work**

**appoint
domestic abuse
advocates**

**provide training
on the implications
of abuse in the
workplace**

**disseminate
information about
the organisation's
initiatives as well as
local and national
support and
advice lines**

TIME

How to implement a policy internally

There are a range of options available depending on the budget and time you have


“ It is vital that employers work with specialists to develop their organisational response to domestic and sexual abuse, recognising the mutual, positive benefits for survivors and the organisation as a whole. ”

Mary Mason,
CEO Solace Women's Aid



BUDGET

Take Action Today: 10 Practical Tips



Recognise the problem

1. Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.

2. Look for changes in the way an employee dresses, for example excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn.



Respond

3. Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof.

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



Provide support

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.

6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace.

7. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home.

8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.



Refer to the appropriate help

9. Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors (Refuge/Respect 2010).

10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse.



Workplace Policy Checklist

Does your domestic abuse policy...

Have a policy statement and/or organisational commitment to oppose all forms of domestic abuse?

Define domestic abuse?

Include statistics on domestic abuse?

Include clear indicators to identify the different forms of domestic abuse?

Contain a commitment to review and monitor the policy on a regular basis?

Clarify the specific roles & responsibilities of managers?

Clarify the specific roles & responsibilities of the HR team?

Clarify the specific roles & responsibilities of employees?

Commit to challenge perpetrators?

Commit to prioritise confidentiality wherever possible?

Clearly set out information on practical and supportive measures in the workplace?

Provide an assurance to prioritise health and safety at work?

Include contact details for domestic abuse link staff?

Commit to provide training to all staff on domestic abuse and what the policy offers?

Commit to distributing the policy to all employees?

Provide contact details of local and national support and advice agencies?

Assets:

Domestic Violence resource manual for employers by Refuge
Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse by the Department for Health and SafeLives
The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence Research Outcomes
'Domestic violence resource manual for employers', 2nd ed., Refuge

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The Project Team:

Jemima Lovatt, The Law Society
Tala Dajani, Reckitt Benckiser
Erik Parigger, One Young World
Priya Chande, L'Oreal
Kian Bakhtiari, Dentsu
Uzair Patel, Barclays.
Emma Powell, University of Bath
Chiara Lisowski, Bristol-Myers Squibb
Lydia Rollinson, YouGov
Melissa Bryant, Privacy International
Esther Marshall, Unilever
Charlie Oliver, GoodBrand
Romy Wakil, Mental Health Counsellor
Catherine Thompson, Fairtrade Foundation
Fatima Zaman, UK Civil Service
Sara Shewani, Telefonica

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For more information and to discuss taking the next steps towards ending domestic abuse please email Jemima Lovatt at jemima.lovatt@oneyoungworld.com



“ During my abusive relationship, I had two jobs in which both employers saw that my energy decreased, I lacked focus and was unable to concentrate. This resulted in disciplinary meetings. In one of the jobs, my contract was not renewed. I was afraid to talk about it at work and also terrified of disclosing anything in case my partner found out. Now I am three years into my recovery and love my current job. **My new employer has supported me through the counselling and has been understanding when I've been struggling to cope. Gaining confidence through my new job is an important part of the process of claiming my life back.** ”

survivor of
domestic abuse