



# Domestic abuse:

## a toolkit for employers

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In association with



Public Health  
England

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## Introduction

An estimated

**1.9 million adults**

aged **16 to 59**

experienced **domestic abuse** in the last year<sup>1</sup>

Abuse is not just about **physical violence** – it can also be **emotional, sexual and economic**<sup>5</sup>



The **cost of domestic abuse** to business is estimated at

**£1.9 billion a year**

due to decreased productivity, time off work, lost wages and sick pay<sup>3</sup>



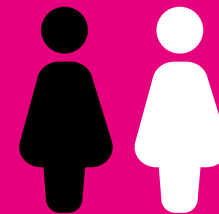
**75%**

of those experiencing **domestic abuse**

are targeted **at work**<sup>2</sup>

**86%** of **HR leads**

agree that employers have a **duty of care to provide support** to employees on the issue of domestic abuse<sup>4</sup>



**Two women are killed each week** by a current or former partner<sup>1</sup>

There was an average of **less than one disclosure**

to employers\* over the previous 12 months, which suggests **not enough employees feel supported** to raise the problem<sup>4</sup>

**54%**

of employers said that it caused the quality of an

**employee's work to suffer**

and

**56%**

said it led to **absenteeism**<sup>4</sup>



**Domestic abuse** takes place at **all levels of society**, regardless of gender, social class, race, religion, sexuality or disability<sup>6</sup>

**1 in 4 women**



and **1 in 6 men**

suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>



Only **5%**

of organisations have a **specific policy or guidelines** on the issue<sup>4</sup>

## Introduction

**An estimated 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 experienced domestic abuse in the last year. Two women each week and one man each month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner.**

Domestic abuse is a hugely destructive problem and we have a collective responsibility to tackle it.

Employers have an important role to play in society's response to domestic abuse. Employers owe a duty of care to employees and have a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment. Preventing and tackling domestic abuse is an integral part of this.

A report commissioned by The Vodafone Foundation, 'Domestic Violence and Abuse: Working together to transform responses in the workplace', demonstrates the commitment of business to make a real difference.

While the research showed that employers overwhelmingly recognise their duty of care, it also showed how much needs to be done to ensure that all employees who are affected by domestic abuse receive the support they need to be safe and to rebuild their lives.

This toolkit will help your organisation, whether private business, public sector or charity, make a commitment to respond to the risk of domestic abuse and build an approach that ensures all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse.

Men, women and children all experience domestic abuse, and can also all be perpetrators of abuse. However, evidence shows that women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and the majority of perpetrators are men. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of social class, race, religion, sexuality or disability. Individuals may experience abuse or be affected by it long after they have left their partner.

***"This is a great toolkit which addresses a hugely important issue. The suggested actions and resources are very helpful, and I think organisations of all sizes will really benefit from using the toolkit."***

**Jude Leighton**  
Head of Housing,  
United St Saviour's Charity

**Domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another and can take many different forms including:**



**Psychological**



**Physical**



**Sexual**



**Emotional**



**Verbal**



**Economic**

This toolkit is intended for business leaders, senior practitioners, HR, Occupational Health, Health & Safety, and line managers.

The case studies in this toolkit have been developed following consultation with experts working with people experiencing domestic abuse and perpetrators, and through the contribution of employers who are taking steps to address the issue. The case studies highlight the personal stories of individuals affected by domestic abuse as well as practical examples of the initiatives developed by employers to support them.

The focus of this toolkit is abuse by an intimate partner, and the important role that employers can play in preventing abuse and providing the best support possible for employees affected by domestic abuse.

The police, the criminal justice system more broadly, as well as those in the healthcare and education sectors are increasingly aware of their responsibilities, and businesses must also play a key part in tackling the problem.

## Three key actions for employers



### Acknowledge

Use this toolkit to help understand the issues, and acknowledge every employer's responsibility to address domestic abuse. Enable colleagues to openly discuss this topic, and provide a supportive workplace



### Respond

Review your policies and processes to ensure you are providing a supportive workplace and can respond to disclosure. Make sure the policies and processes are implemented correctly



### Refer

Provide access to organisations who can help employees affected by the issue. For example, signpost to a resource such as the [Bright Sky app](#) (detailed on page 7) to report concerns. For a full list of supportive organisations and links, see [Resources](#) section

The 'Acknowledge, Respond, Refer' process has been developed by Lloyds Banking Group as part of their approach to tackling domestic abuse.

## The business case

**The cost of domestic abuse to business is estimated at £1.9 billion a year due to decreased productivity, time off work, lost wages and sick pay. It can potentially have an adverse impact on staff morale, as well as on an organisation's image and reputation. Research shows that 75 per cent of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work.**

It is often possible for those who use abusive behaviours to use workplace resources, such as phones or email, to threaten, harass or abuse current or former partners. For others, the workplace can be a safe haven and provide a route away from harm. Also, having a job can provide the economic independence that helps people overcome their ordeal and rebuild their lives. It is however important to note that employment can sometimes prevent people from leaving abusive relationships, as they may not want to go in to refuges or leave their area.

Colleagues may also be affected, and face direct threats or intimidation. They may have to cover for workers who are experiencing domestic abuse. Colleagues may be aware that abuse is taking place but not know how to help.

Despite this, the Vodafone Foundation-commissioned research revealed a disconnect between what is happening on the ground to employees and how employers respond:

- Awareness and understanding of domestic abuse has increased. Many employers want to do more but need support as only five per cent of

organisations have a specific policy or guidelines on the issue at the moment

- In medium and large organisations there was an average of less than one disclosure over the previous 12 months, which suggests not enough employees feel comfortable and supported enough to raise the problem at work

Having a workplace policy/guidance on domestic abuse sends a clear message that it is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace, and that the employer wants to help.

Implementing an effective workplace policy/guidance could improve staff wellbeing and may help to retain skilled and experienced staff, and enhance your reputation as a responsible employer.

For more information see the Equality and Human Rights Commission on workplace policies around domestic abuse, including the business case for having a policy.



## Positive partnership

**Taking a proactive and supportive approach can help prevent domestic abuse. An organisation's response to domestic abuse begins with raising awareness and breaking down the stigma.**

This will help create a supportive working environment that enables employees affected by domestic abuse to acknowledge to themselves or their employer that their relationships are abusive or coercive, and can help prevent the escalation of such behaviour. Employers can also ensure the right access and signposting to support from the outset.

Your approach will have greater impact if it has the support and consent of employees. Engage with them from the start by asking them what will help them and encourage them to understand the issues, such as the possible indicators of abuse. Involve them in creating a workplace policy/guidance on domestic abuse and ensure that it is shared as widely as possible within the organisation.

If feasible, appoint a senior HR lead who can help lead the corporate conversation and will be trusted by employees to deal with their concerns sensitively and in confidence. HR can provide leadership and support for staff in the context of organisational policies and guidelines.

**Bright Sky** is a free app providing support and information for anyone who may be in an abusive relationship, or those who are concerned about someone they know.

The app provides:

- A UK-wide directory of specialist domestic abuse support services, and the ability to call national helplines
- A secure tool where incidents of abuse can be logged, without the content being saved on the device
- Questionnaires to assess the safety of a relationship

***“As employers we should all be more aware of domestic abuse and how we can support those affected. This toolkit is a very helpful step to achieving that, and has certainly helped me to understand the issues more clearly.”***

**Sian Lea**

Senior Programme Manager,  
Shiva Foundation

## Developing this toolkit

**This toolkit has been informed by research carried out by the Vodafone Foundation, using data collected by Ipsos MORI, as well as an evidence summary collated by Public Health England.**

The methodology of this report was:

A team of four researchers (two professors and two researchers) conducted a targeted literature and policy review in June to August 2017. One of the researchers focused on academic searches and the other focused on policies and so called 'grey' literature, which is material produced by government, academics, business and industry, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers, and as a result, often falls through the cracks. Targeted communication took place with a small number of organisations which were mentioned within literature but which did not have publicly available materials.

The search terms used were different combinations of: domestic abuse, domestic violence, battering, perpetrators, batterers, workplace, employment, employer.

There was very little material, and the academic literature is more focused on making the case for seeing the workplace as a site of intervention than evaluating what works. The searches were limited to materials written in English.

The toolkit has also been supported by a steering group of practitioners, professionals and business experts. The list of contributors can be viewed in the [Acknowledgements](#) on page 42. It also draws on the experience of employers who have taken steps to address domestic abuse in the workplace.

This resource also signposts to external organisations that offer advice and support to employers and employees.

The focus of this toolkit is abuse by an intimate partner. Other forms of domestic abuse and violence, such as crimes in the name of 'honour', human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and female genital mutilation are outside the scope of this toolkit.

For information on so called honour-based violence, forced marriages and FGM, the Halo Project Charity is a national project providing advice and support.



## Insurance Charities foreword by:

**Annali-Joy Thornicroft, CEO & Company Secretary and Graham Cave, Director**



The Insurance Charities are delighted to back this new initiative to help employers support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. For too long this is an issue that dared not be discussed in the workplace. We are determined to help break the wall of silence that makes it difficult for many people to reach out for the support they need.



The Insurance Charities have worked alongside insurance employers for more than 100 years to support those going through difficult financial and personal situations. We have seen a growing number of people coming forward as a consequence of domestic abuse. But they have often hidden what has been happening either at home or in the workplace, for fear of judgment or simply because they do not feel their colleagues would know how to support them. This is unacceptable and must change.

Although many employers are fully committed to meeting their legal and moral obligations to their valued workforce, we know that there is often a disconnect between employees who suffer domestic abuse and those who have responsibility for their wellbeing and performance.

The recent Vodafone Foundation report found that employers widely recognise the impact of domestic abuse on the workplace. 54 per cent said that it caused the quality of an employee's work to suffer, and 56 per cent said it led to absenteeism. Yet the same report found that for all medium and large organisations, there was an average of less than one disclosure per organisation in the last 12 months.

We believe this toolkit provides employers with the information and advice they need to bridge that gap. It will help employers foster a culture of openness and encourage more employees to seek help when they need it, confident that they will be treated with understanding and compassion. In keeping with the proud tradition of The Insurance Charities, this toolkit provides practical support to those at a time of urgent need.

## Jointly authored foreword by:

**Rosanna O'Connor, Director, Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco and Justice, Public Health England**  
and **Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community**



Domestic abuse is common, and if you're an employer, you should be aware that people who work for you may be affected by it.

Colleagues may be experiencing physical and emotional harm, and their lives may be at risk. But they may be unlikely to tell you, and be hiding it from their colleagues. People who experience domestic abuse often live in shame of what is happening, and although they are desperate for help they fear the consequences of going to the police or of fleeing the family home.

Domestic abuse is a crime and should not be treated as a 'private' matter.

75 per cent of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work. Employers have a duty of care and a legal responsibility to all employees, and the workplace should be safe and supportive. But only five per cent of organisations have a specific policy or guideline to inform line managers and

HR how to respond. This is one of the reasons why we have produced an evidenced based toolkit to help employers develop this policy area in their wellbeing strategies. Women and men who experience domestic abuse often suffer in silence at work.

The human cost is immeasurable. But we also know that the cost to business of failing to intervene is substantial, estimated at almost £2 billion a year. The risk is present for all employers, regardless of the size of organisation or the nature of the business. By doing the right thing for employees and colleagues, employers can mitigate this risk.

Employers are increasingly taking a new and positive approach to mental health at work, and huge progress has been made. Now is the time to tackle the culture of silence around domestic abuse. The government has shown its determination for positive change with the new Domestic Abuse Bill.

With this toolkit we are calling on employers to follow the government's lead. It is time not to just talk about domestic abuse but to act.



## Taking a holistic approach

This toolkit provides clear and comprehensive advice on steps that employers can take to help prevent domestic abuse, and be as supportive as possible when an employee is affected by domestic abuse. It sets out steps that are easy to follow and helps you choose the best free resources for you and your team.

This toolkit is an important addition to the existing suite of interconnected employer toolkits from Business in the Community and Public Health England, a hub for employers on a range of issues relating to employee health and wellbeing. Organisations that foster an open and inclusive culture will also make it easier for those experiencing domestic abuse to seek support from their employer.

We know that an effective approach to employee wellbeing is a whole person/whole system approach. Each of our toolkits is designed to help employers build a culture that champions good mental and physical health.

For more information, see the full range of employer toolkits from Business in the Community and Public Health England.

Many of the issues covered by these toolkits are interrelated, and domestic abuse has particular connections with mental health, suicide prevention, sleep, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. For example, the term 'Toxic Trio' has been used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse which have been identified as common features of families where harm to children and adults has occurred.

### SMEs

This toolkit has advice that is relevant to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

SMEs can be disproportionately affected, both financially and emotionally, by issues like this that impact staff.

This toolkit provides practical information about how to support staff affected by domestic abuse. The advice is simple to implement, supported by resources that are free or inexpensive. The crucial element is a commitment to foster an open and inclusive culture.

## Taking a proactive approach

Working in partnership with employees, employers can take a positive approach to support health and wellbeing at work, with a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

Designed in partnership with business for business, and with support from an expert advisory board, the toolkit reflects the experience of responsible employers whose proactive approach has been supported by their employees.



# 1/ Understanding the issue

## Being aware and proactive

**It is not always easy to detect when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse. Abuse is often associated with physical violence, but it may also be emotional or psychological.**

The indicators opposite may point towards a problem with domestic abuse, but they could also be the result of a different issue such as ill health. An aware and proactive employer should be looking out for these issues more generally as an indicator that something might be wrong, without assuming it will be related to domestic abuse. The more supportive atmosphere an employer can create, the more likely employees are going to feel comfortable disclosing a problem with domestic abuse.



### Work productivity

- Change in the person's working patterns: for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
- Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- Change in the use of the phone/email: for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may indicate coercive control



### Changes in behaviour or demeanour

- 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

Source: Department of Health / SafeLives

- Obsession with leaving work on time
- Secretive regarding home life
- Worried about leaving children at home



### Physical indicators

- 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
- Substance use/misuse
- Fatigue/sleep disorders



### Other indicators

- 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





## One size doesn't fit all

**Be aware of the individual needs and experiences that employees may have.**

**For example:**

- Older women and men are less likely to report their experiences of domestic abuse
- Those with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual violence than non-disabled people
- Ethnic minority women and men face additional barriers to accessing support. Their experiences may be compounded by discrimination. They may be unwilling to seek help from statutory agencies because they fear a racist response
- Women and men from different cultural backgrounds might experience abuse in different forms, such as so called 'honour' based violence
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual women and men can be vulnerable to abusers who threaten to 'out' them to colleagues, employers and family members
- Transgender women and men have fewer services available to them, and can face similar emotional abuse
- Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse, and existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after giving birth
- Men experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence find it more difficult to disclose abuse and often find more barriers to accessing support. For more information on understanding the indicators that a male employee may be experiencing domestic abuse, see ManKind.
- Perpetrators may be very reluctant to acknowledge what they are doing and to ask for help

*“National Grid appreciates that domestic abuse can severely impact an employee’s mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their ability to perform to their full potential at work. As a result, we want to do all we can to support our employees.*

*“One way we do this is through offering an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) service where employees can speak to a counsellor in confidence. Our EAP statistics show very low numbers of employees presenting with domestic abuse but we recognise that this may disguise the real number, as some victims may be reluctant to seek help.*

*“National Grid values our involvement in the creation of this toolkit and we’re looking to develop additional guidance and support for any of our employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, we’re hosting two workshops where a range of employers will discuss and take away practical actions to start the debate within their organisations. We’re also hosting an evening for HR Directors where issues and risks for employers will be discussed.”*

**Sarah Stanton**

UK Director of HR, National Grid



## The legal context for employers

**Any employer looking to help tackle domestic abuse needs to understand the broad legal context for the issue.**

### Health and safety legislation

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 main 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

An effective workplace policy/guidance on domestic abuse helps to ensure that employers are complying with these laws. This extends to wherever the workplace may be, including people who work from home.

### Domestic abuse and the law

In 2018 the government launched a major consultation on domestic abuse, which is intended to lead to a Domestic Violence and Abuse Act. This would consolidate other relevant legislation and introduce new measures to help people affected by domestic abuse.

In the meantime, the Sentencing Council guidelines on domestic abuse were revised in February 2018.

The new guidelines bring a distinct change in emphasis in relation to seriousness. The previous guidelines stated that offences committed in a domestic context should be seen as no less serious than those in a non-domestic context, whereas the new guidelines emphasise that the fact an offence took place in a domestic context makes it more serious.

This is because domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident; it is likely to become increasingly frequent and more serious the longer it continues, and may result in death. It can also lead to lasting trauma for survivors and their children.

For the first time, the guidelines also include a reference to abuse perpetrated through use of technology, such as email/text, social networking sites or tracking devices fitted to a car, since these are increasingly common methods by which domestic abuse can occur.

The guidelines recognise that these offences can affect people of all backgrounds. They are clear that abuse can occur between family members as well as between intimate partners.

## Myth busting

**There are many myths surrounding domestic abuse. Understanding the real facts helps to deconstruct these misconceptions so employers can develop truly effective support for their employees.**

The following myth busters are sourced from Refuge.

### ✗ **Myth: Alcohol and drugs are to blame**

✓ **Fact:** Many people are abusive when they are sober. Most people who drink alcohol are not domestic abusers. Blaming drink or drugs is an excuse, a way of denying responsibility.

### ✗ **Myth: It only happens to families from lower socio-economic backgrounds**

✓ **Fact:** People experiencing domestic abuse come from all walks of life, and can be any race, sexuality or religion.

### ✗ **Myth: People who are being abused would leave if it was that bad**

✓ **Fact:** It can be extremely difficult to leave an abusive partner. People experiencing domestic abuse may fear what a partner will do if they leave, particularly if the partner has threatened to kill her/him or the children. They may believe that staying is better for the children. Those who suffer abuse are often at the greatest risk of harm at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner.

The person experiencing abuse may feel ashamed of what has happened and believe it is their fault. They may hope that the partner will change, remembering good times at the start of the relationship and hoping they will return.

They may not have access to money, or anywhere to go. They may not know where to turn for help, particularly if English is not their first language.

### ✗ **Myth: Abusers grow up in violent homes**

✓ **Fact:** Growing up in a violent home is a risk factor, and some children who experience abuse do go on to be abusive in their relationships. But many do not. Instead they may be repelled by violence because they have seen the damage it causes.

Abusers may learn to be violent from the society within which they grow up but people who blame violence solely on their childhood experiences are avoiding taking responsibility for their actions. Violence is a choice an abuser makes; they alone are responsible.

### ✗ **Myth: Some people like violence**

✓ **Fact:** Most people who are abused live in fear of their abuser. This is a way of blaming the survivor for what is happening.

## Myth busting continued

✗ **Myth: Some people ask for it. They get what they deserve**

✓ **Fact:** Violence and intimidation are not acceptable ways to solve conflict in a relationship. People using abusive behaviours will often attack their partner for no apparent reason. Again, this is a way of making excuses for the abuser's behaviour. It allows an abusive person to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

✗ **Myth: People using abusive behaviours have a mental illness**

✓ **Fact:** The vast majority of people who abuse are not mentally ill. Research shows that the proportion of abusers with mental health problems is no higher than in society as a whole.

✗ **Myth: Stress is to blame for domestic abuse**

✓ **Fact:** Some people who abuse their partners do suffer from stress. Again, this is a factor – not the underlying cause of the abuse. Many people who are stressed are never abusive.

✗ **Myth: They lose their temper sometimes, that's all**

✓ **Fact:** It often is said that people who use abusive behaviours “lose their temper” or are “out of control”. The truth is that they are very much in control.

Abusers are usually selective about when they hit their partner, for example in private or when the children are asleep. They choose not to mark their face or other parts of the body which show. They never “lose their temper” with other people. This suggests they are very aware of what they are doing and are “in control”.

Many abuse their partners emotionally and psychologically, without ever using physical violence. This shows the extent of their control.

✗ **Myth: Domestic abuse is a private matter, you shouldn't get involved**

✓ **Fact:** For far too long domestic abuse has been allowed to happen behind closed doors. People think what goes on in the home is private, and not their problem. Domestic abuse is a crime wherever it occurs. It is against the law. We are all affected by domestic abuse; we all have a responsibility to speak out against it. Only then can we tackle it effectively.

✗ **Myth: Men can't experience domestic abuse**

✓ **Fact:** Although women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, it is certainly a very real issue for male survivors too, in heterosexual, gay and other kinds of relationships.

✗ **Myth: Perpetrators of domestic abuse cannot change**

✓ **Fact:** Perpetrators can change. Treatment and support is available.



## 2/ Taking action

## Workplace policy/guidance

### An effective workplace policy/guidance is critical to raise awareness, identify responsibilities and ensure provision, support and safety.

Making a policy/guidance will help create a safer culture where employees feel able to disclose issues of domestic abuse, and feel reassured that appropriate support will be provided.

Every organisation is different, and your approach should take into account your business activity, size and structure. You can take simple steps or develop a really progressive policy/guidance that defines your organisation as a responsible employer.

For an example workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse, see page 25 of this Unison resource.

## Defining domestic abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

**Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.**

**The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:**



**Psychological**



**Physical**



**Sexual**



**Economic**



**Emotional**

## Guiding your approach



The below examples outline three levels to help guide your approach to tackling domestic abuse – whether you are starting out on your journey or are more advanced.

### 1. Making a commitment

- ☑ Define domestic abuse: Abuse is not just about physical violence, but can also be emotional, sexual and economic (see full definition on the previous page). Employees should be aware that misconduct, inside and outside of work, can result in disciplinary action. Employees also should be aware that domestic abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction
- ☑ Tell all employees that the organisation understands the risks and consequences of domestic abuse and will not tolerate it in any form, fully supports colleagues who experience domestic abuse, and will take action against those who use abusive behaviours
- ☑ Lead from the top: By agreeing actions at a senior level, employees who will drive the changes will feel they have the support and authority to confront domestic abuse
- ☑ Foster a safe and supportive workplace culture where employees are able to talk openly about difficult issues without fear of stigma or harassment
- ☑ Signpost to local and national support and advice agency contacts (for example through posters on the back of toilet doors). This will give employees affected by domestic abuse and perpetrators of domestic abuse the opportunity to access advice on financial, health and housing issues as well as legal assistance

### 2. Training and support

- ☑ Provide training to ensure that the organisation has staff who know what steps to take to support colleagues. Recognise that there can be additional issues for employees because of their gender identity, ethnic background, religion, age, sexuality or disability. Local domestic abuse experts are key partners to assist in providing this training. For example, Women's Aid provides an 'ask me' scheme, which offers a free two-day training course to inspire community members to become an 'ask me ambassador'. The training helps participants learn how to respond to a disclosure and about the expert services they can signpost people to for help



### Guiding your approach continued:

- ✓ Take practical steps to encourage the disclosure and discussion of abuse and identify appropriate support. Managers should endeavour to support those experiencing domestic abuse in a sympathetic, non-judgemental, confidential and confident manner
- ✓ List steps to ensure those experiencing domestic abuse are able to work in a safe and supported workplace. This may include diverting phone calls or alerting reception and security staff. Links can also be made to an Employee Assistance Provider
- ✓ Consider making reasonable adjustments for those whose health and performance are adversely affected by domestic abuse. For example, ensure that employees who have disclosed are not penalised by sickness or absence management systems. A period of paid leave can

make a huge difference in allowing someone experiencing abuse to seek medical or legal support

- ✓ Reinforce your commitment to challenge perpetrators: be clear that abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator
- ✓ Prioritise confidentiality: Managers are responsible for ensuring information is not disclosed and that all employees are aware of their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality

### 3. Going further

- ✓ Designate a senior HR person or senior leader with responsibility for your workplace policy on domestic abuse. This will be somebody who can be approached in confidence to discuss issues relating to domestic abuse

- ✓ Engage with your extended business network, including suppliers and customers. Tell them what you are doing around domestic abuse and encourage them to join your initiatives
- ✓ Evaluate your approach in partnership with employees and report back periodically
- ✓ Work with a union to publicise the support on offer
- ✓ Share best practice with other employers, both locally and nationally. Learn from each other's experiences

You can get help with your organisation's approach to domestic abuse from a Community Safety Partnership and from voluntary and community organisations with specialist knowledge on gender equality and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.



## Examples of practical workplace support for people experiencing domestic abuse



- ✓ Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abusive partner/ ex-partner telephones or visits the workplace
- ✓ Allow an individual to change work patterns or workload and allow flexible or more flexible working or special leave to facilitate any practical arrangements
- ✓ Agree special leave for individuals to facilitate any practical arrangements. Examples include: attending court; attending mediation; meeting or calling a solicitor; viewing properties; meeting teachers at school; talking to their bank or getting advice from domestic violence organisations
- ✓ Agree flexible working hours to enable individuals (or their children) to attend health appointments resulting from the abuse, such as seeing a counsellor. This may be needed for some time after the abuse has stopped
- ✓ If the abuser has an employees' work email and telephone details, consider diverting their phone calls and emails to help shield them from their abuser
- ✓ Notify reception and security staff if the abuser is known to come to the workplace
- ✓ Provide a copy of any existing orders against the abuser and a photograph of the abuser to reception and security staff
- ✓ Check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
- ✓ Review content of personal information, such as temporary or new addresses, bank or health care details
- ✓ Ask individuals to supply you with an up to date emergency contact number for a trusted friend or family member
- ✓ Review the employee's next of kin information (with their consent)
- ✓ Where practical, consider offering a temporary or permanent change of workplace, working times/ patterns
- ✓ Where practical, offer changes in specific duties, such as not expecting the employee to answer telephones or sit on reception
- ✓ Move the employee out of public view, ensuring that they are not visible from reception points or ground floor windows
- ✓ Ensure that the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
- ✓ Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the employee

## Opening the conversation

**The aim of starting a conversation in this area is to be supportive to employees rather than to encourage disclosure. Many people dealing with domestic abuse will never feel comfortable disclosing it to their employer as they may not even be ready to admit it to themselves.**

If a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a conversation to discuss the issue on a general level and identify and implement appropriate support.

Begin by asking indirect questions, to establish an empathetic relationship with the employee. Be patient, offering support to encourage disclosure.

**Below are some examples of questions and prompts that could be used:**

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted/ upset at the moment – are you ok?
- If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you
- Is everything all right at home?
- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready
- What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

Avoid blaming the person experiencing domestic abuse. It is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential. It is also important to work on the basis of believing the employee so that they feel supported.

**The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear through a workplace policy/guidance that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.**

## Disclosure

### If an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it can be challenging for the manager/colleague too.

An employee may step forward to raise concerns about a colleague who they suspect is experiencing domestic abuse.

Reassure them that the information they have shared will be treated in the strictest confidence. Consider what steps might be necessary to ensure they remain safe in the workplace, in case a perpetrator suspects they may have reported the abuse.

Be aware that such disclosures are more likely following the launch of your organisation's policy on domestic abuse. Ensure you are prepared for this by having the necessary channels and processes established to support next steps after a disclosure.

It is important to remember that the impact of domestic abuse can be long term. Employers should be aware that court processes can take several years, and that abuse may continue long after the relationship has ended.

### The following guidance may help:

- ✓ Suggest that you go somewhere quiet and comfortable, away from the office/desk if possible
- ✓ Acknowledge the courage of the employee and how difficult it must be to talk
- ✓ Confirm the complete confidentiality of the disclosure. As a guide for managers, any information should only be disclosed to anyone else if it is absolutely necessary in providing help and support and with the prior agreement of the person who has disclosed. Exceptions to that are if the manager believes there is an imminent threat to life, harm of children, or threat against the employer. At that point, an employer should contact the police and follow their advice on next steps
- ✓ Have an open posture. Reach towards them but be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space
- ✓ Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful
- ✓ Do not be judgemental. Avoid language that indicates blame or fault ("Why don't you leave?" / "How can you let this happen?" / "Why haven't you told anyone before?")
- ✓ Allow plenty of time and space for them to speak
- ✓ Following disclosure, contact HR for a debrief while respecting the individual's confidentiality

## TecSOS

TecSOS (Technical SOS) is a mobile solution for people experiencing domestic abuse, which provides immediate connection to the police at the touch of a button, 24/7.

The TecSOS handset provides an enhanced level of confidence, protection and reassurance for those experiencing domestic abuse:

- Users activate the device which initiates a 999 call
- The call is immediately identifiable to the 999 operator and is routed to the nearest police call handling centre
- The user's location and details are available to the police and call handler

TecSOS is managed in the UK by Thames Valley Partnership and is supported financially by the Vodafone Foundation. TecSOS is only available via the police.

## Dealing with perpetrators

**Employers have a duty of care to support employees dealing with domestic abuse, and a key aspect of doing so is to be proactive about dealing with any employees who use abusive behaviours.**

**This information may come in a variety of ways, including:**

### Self-disclosure

This may be prompted by a crisis, such as a particularly serious assault, arrest or ultimatum from the abused partner.

### Indirect disclosure

This could be:

- A direct allegation shared with the employer by the person experiencing abuse
- An allegation by a family member, friend or colleague
- Notification by the police or through a DBS check
- The employee needs time off to attend court

**Managers should also be aware of indicators that an employee may be using abusive behaviours.**

These can include:

- Negative comments made by the abuser about a partner (and women/men in general)
- Jealously or possessiveness
- Expressing anger and blaming their partner for issues
- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner
- Repeated injuries (scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles, injuries to wrists and forearms, which could be the consequence of their partner defending themselves)

There may be any number of reasons for this behaviour. But managers who suspect that domestic abuse may be an issue should have the confidence to discuss this with the employee. When doing so, they should ensure that their own safety is not compromised. For example, they may take another staff member with them, or meet in a public place.

Employers have a duty of care towards ALL their employees. This includes perpetrators of abuse who, through their actions, are damaging their own lives as well as the lives of others.

Engaging with perpetrators in a constructive way doesn't mean excusing the abuse and can help to increase safety and even save lives. Employers can actively promote their policy on domestic abuse, highlight that it absolutely won't be tolerated in any form and encourage anyone affected by the issue, whether as an abuser or being abused, to seek support.

Employers should recognise that abusers may need help to change their behaviour, and should support and encourage employees to address violent and abusive behaviours of all kinds.

## **Responding to perpetrators**

### **Domestic abuse is a serious issue, and how the organisation responds to a perpetrator and their disclosures could affect the extent to which they accept responsibility for their behaviour and the need to change.**

The information that the manager and organisation gathers will be the basis for its decision about how best to engage with a perpetrator of domestic abuse. The information will help determine what kind of specialist help is required, either for them directly or to manage the risk to other employees, and whether any further action is required.

Managers should keep a confidential record of a disclosure and any action/decisions that they have taken. Good records may subsequently help in any legal proceedings or disciplinary hearing involving the perpetrator.

It is important to remember that it may not be possible to assess whether someone is a perpetrator based solely on their outward behaviour. Many perpetrators conceal their abuse by behaving pleasantly to most people.

### **Reduce the risk for people dealing with domestic abuse**

The safety and wellbeing of the person experiencing abuse (and any family members, particularly children) is an urgent priority. Consider what support can be provided to them in the workplace, or externally. Make links with specialist agencies, if relevant.

### **Reduce the risk to other employees**

Consider what potential impact the perpetrator's behaviour may have on other employees. Assess the risk and take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate the risk. Care must be taken at all times with regard to the disclosure of information to the perpetrator. For example, information about where they are, how they can be contacted or when they are going home.

### **If the perpetrator is targeting an employee**

Steps must be taken to mitigate further risks to the survivor and other employees. These may include reassigning duties/roles, and restricting the perpetrator's access to information about the person they are targeting (including computer programmes). Some actions may require co-ordination between the managers of the perpetrator and of the person they are abusing. This should be done in consultation with the person experiencing abuse and your legal representative.



Sometimes the person experiencing abuse and the perpetrator may choose to seek solutions jointly; their decision should be respected and supported.

An employee who uses abusive behaviour may no longer be able to carry out certain duties and may require redeployment. For example, it would be inappropriate for a perpetrator of domestic abuse to be providing advice or services to vulnerable men, women and children and/or the public.

## Discussions with perpetrators

**In exploratory discussions with an employee who has used abusive behaviours about potential support at work, managers should observe the following principles:**

- ☒ Be clear that abuse is always unacceptable and that it may constitute criminal behaviour. Use the legal definition to provide a clear stance from HR
- ☒ Ensure their own safety is paramount
- ☒ Be clear that abusive behaviour is a choice
- ☒ Be respectful
- ☒ Be positive about the possibility of choosing to stop. It is possible for perpetrators to change if they recognise that they have a problem and take steps to change their behaviour
- ☒ Be aware that on some level the perpetrator may be unhappy about their behaviour
- ☒ Be aware that domestic abuse is about a range of controlling behaviours not just physical violence
- ☒ Help the perpetrator to be aware of the potential cost of continued abuse. This could include: arrest; prison; loss of their relationship, long term physical and emotional damage to their partner and children; loss of contact with children; being sacked from work; loss of their home; financial losses; damage or loss of relationships with family and friends

# Resources



# Resources

## Resources for employees experiencing domestic abuse:

**The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline**, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.  
**Freephone: 0800 2000 247**

[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Bright Sky app**

[www.hestia.org/brightsky](http://www.hestia.org/brightsky)

**ManKind: advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse**

[www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims](http://www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims)

## Resources for employers:

**Department of Health / SafeLives. Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse**

[www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/DV%20Employer%27s%20guidance%20FINAL%20Update%203%20-%20SafeLives%20rebranded.pdf](http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/DV%20Employer%27s%20guidance%20FINAL%20Update%203%20-%20SafeLives%20rebranded.pdf)

**Domestic violence resource manual for employers, developed in partnership by Refuge and Respect**

[www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/content/files/file/Respect\\_Refuge\\_DV\\_Manual\\_A4\\_76pp.pdf](http://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/content/files/file/Respect_Refuge_DV_Manual_A4_76pp.pdf)

**EHRC / CIPD Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse**

[www.cipd.co.uk/Images/managing-and-supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse\\_2013\\_tcm18-10528.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/managing-and-supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse_2013_tcm18-10528.pdf)

**EHRC – Domestic abuse: workplace policies and managing and supporting employees**

[www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/domestic-abuse-workplace-policies-and-managing-and-supporting-employees](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/domestic-abuse-workplace-policies-and-managing-and-supporting-employees)

**Refuge and Respect project to support employers' responses to domestic violence – evaluation report**

<http://respect.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Its-a-difficult-subject-isnt-it.pdf>

**Sentencing Council guidelines on domestic abuse**

[www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/news/item/sentencing-council-publishes-new-guideline-on-domestic-abuse](http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/news/item/sentencing-council-publishes-new-guideline-on-domestic-abuse)

**The Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse**

<https://eida.org.uk/>

**The Intervention Initiative toolkit, University of Exeter**

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/research/interventioninitiative/toolkit/>

**Unison – Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue (includes 'Model workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse', p25)**

[www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24192.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24192.pdf)



# Case studies

A black and white photograph of several open books arranged in a circle, viewed from above. The pages of the books are fanned out, creating a radial pattern that converges towards the center. The lighting is dramatic, with the edges of the pages catching the light against a dark background.



## Anonymous, female survivor of domestic abuse

My ex-husband became abusive soon after we were married. Without the support of my employer I would have struggled to get through my darkest days and I would not be here today.

I was introduced to my ex-husband by a relative. At the time he was in Britain illegally. He was kind and caring and we became engaged. We married in India and returned to England. But I soon realised I had made a mistake, as his behaviour towards me changed and he became threatening. He was strongly built and although he never hit me, one look from him was enough to let me know what he was capable of doing to me.

He wouldn't let me sleep until I had done the chores, which meant I did not go to bed until after 1am, even when I was heavily pregnant. The abuse continued through my pregnancy, and when I gave birth I discovered I was carrying twins and miscarried one.

He criticised the way I looked, even though I dressed in the same way as when we met. If I challenged him he would accuse me of being disrespectful. I became a shadow of the person I once was. I felt overweight, and that men paid attention to me because they thought I was easy. I started wearing traditional clothing

at home. My ex-husband stopped me visiting my family if he did not approve. He dictated how much time I spent away from him. If I was earlier or later he would become angry.

He raped and sexually abused me many times. After the last attack I tried to escape the house but he heard the front door creak and the baby cry. He ran after us and punched the car window. I knew I had to go back in as I feared for our safety.

My employers supported me through these tough times. When I was pregnant they allowed me to work later shifts so I could catch up on sleep. They listened and did not judge me. They reassured me that it was his fault, not mine.

On my lunch break my mother would wait outside so I could talk to her properly without fear. She bought me food to eat at tea time. My employer allowed me to have a short break to eat again in the afternoon as I was suffering from sickness throughout the pregnancy and was always hungry. When I was finally able to escape to safety my deputy gave a witness statement to the police of my disclosure of the abuse and the day I tried to leave.

I think my situation would have been made easier if I had access to professional services, including counselling during work hours so my ex-husband would not become suspicious, and advice about services that could help me.

Since leaving my ex-husband, my son and I are both safe and happy away from him. I had a panic alarm installed for one year and this helped me feel safe and able to sleep. I have started a new job and I have progressed with my career.

## Gentoo Group

### Kelly Henderson, Business Manager – Domestic Abuse

At Gentoo, which employs more than 1,200 staff and works with 70,000 social housing customers across the region, we are committed to tackling domestic abuse in all forms. For some staff, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety.

Our 'Domestic Abuse and the Workplace' policy ensures that both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse are aware of the support available. It also provides guidance to line managers when supporting staff who are affected by domestic abuse. As part of our ongoing commitment to tackling domestic abuse in the workplace we are also part of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner's Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse (DVSA) Workplace Champions Network. We currently have 28 Domestic Violence Champions who have received training to enable them to support colleagues experiencing abuse and to signpost them to specialist services where appropriate. They also help raise awareness across the whole of the organisation.

We also support perpetrators to change their behaviour. We do this through the BIG project, a partnership between Gentoo and North East Charities Barnardo's, Impact Family Services and Wearside Women In Need. The programme focuses on early intervention, helping men to change their behaviour at the earliest opportunity.

By training front-line teams and Domestic Abuse Champions to spot the signs of abuse in both the workplace and in our communities, we can play a key role in supporting those affected.

We are always looking at innovative ways to deliver training. One of ways we did this was through a play produced by the Women's Voices Project. The play, 'Make Do And Mend', featured the stories of three women who shared their experiences of emotional, financial, sexual, physical and psychological abuse. Through role play and improvisation, Gentoo staff explored a number of issues, including recognising the breadth of domestic abuse and the impact of emotional and psychological abuse.

Housing providers, which have a wide network of staff and customers, have an important role to play in identifying abuse and supporting victims – and we do a lot of work to influence the housing sectors' response to domestic abuse. We do this by sharing best practice and via the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), of which Gentoo is a cofounder. DAHA's mission is to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse, through lobbying, an accreditation process and research. This is a great way for us to share best practice with other housing associations.

***"I would advise anyone experiencing domestic abuse to come forward to get help and support. For me, it helped to tell someone at work what I was going through. I can honestly say that I would not have pursued through the court if I hadn't had the support provided by work."***

Gentoo staff member



## Gina, female survivor of domestic abuse

Gina was referred to Women's Aid's No Woman Turned Away support project after the realisation that she and her children could not continue to live in a home where she was subjected to domestic violence, and that they needed to find a safe space to live away from her abusive partner.

Gina required safe accommodation for her and her two children, a girl age five and a boy age 13. She needed to be within reasonable distance of her work and college, as she was doing an engineering apprenticeship and felt that was an important part of gaining her independence. She also required self-contained accommodation because communal refuge was not appropriate for her son.

Initially, before Gina's employer knew about the situation, Women's Aid were only able to contact her during her daily break, as staff weren't allowed to take their phone onto the shop floor. This meant communication was very restricted, making it very difficult for her to contact any refuge where there was space to make arrangements to secure the room.

Women's Aid encouraged Gina to talk to her line manager about the domestic violence she faced, and her situation. Her employer was extremely supportive; they completed a domestic violence risk assessment and, with her permission, referred the case to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for additional local support.

After disclosing to her employer, Gina was allowed to have her phone with her at all times while in work, and if she needed to make a call was given unrestricted use of a private office. She was also told she would be able to continue the apprenticeship course if she moved away, as it was run nationwide. And she was given time off to go to meetings with housing and the safeguarding team.

Gina then moved to a refuge out of area, temporarily, to be safe. Following that, she moved in with her family while waiting for suitable accommodation, so she could continue with her apprenticeship.

## Gowling WLG

### Lorna Gavin, Head of Diversity, Inclusion & Corporate Responsibility

Being introduced to The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence really opened our eyes to the scale of domestic abuse, and the realisation that we needed to take action.

As an international law firm with around 1,000 employees, we knew the prevalence of domestic abuse in society meant it was likely that at least some people within our organisation would be affected by it. It was awful to think there were people we worked with that might be experiencing domestic abuse, so we decided to take action.

After ensuring the support of Gowling WLG's senior leadership, we provided expert training and guidance to a range of employees. We brought in The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence to train our HR team on how to understand the signs of abuse and how to support those who disclosed.

We also trained staff on reception as well as our Practice Operation Managers, who help organise personnel; as they're well trusted by colleagues and immersed into the organisation, we knew they would benefit from understanding how to identify

the signs of abuse. Perpetrators can harass colleagues by emails, calls and texts, so our IT team were also trained.

After the training, several Practice Operation Managers realised that some of the people they were in contact with were actually experiencing domestic abuse, and were able to support them.

We used our intranet to signpost all employees to a wide range of support groups. To help staff feel more comfortable in accessing support, we made the framing indirect, asking for example 'are you worried about someone experiencing domestic abuse?'. Our signposting included information for perpetrators looking to address their abusive behaviours. All this information was very well received, and the website received a high volume of traffic.

To give employees further access to support, we put posters up on the back of toilet doors, sharing stories of men and women who had experienced a wide range of abuse – from coercion and control to rape. The posters explained that 'help is closer than you think',

and we provided information about specialist support as well as the option of talking to Practice Operation Managers.

More than a dozen colleagues from across the business have come forward to ask for support as a result of these efforts – from more junior to very senior employees. The posters helped normalise talking about domestic abuse in a supportive environment, and we heard how the information helped employees realise that what was happening to them wasn't acceptable, and that they could get support. The help we provided to these employees included time off for counselling, as well as enabling police to come in and help staff in a safe environment.

We continue to refresh our approach, and have just recruited our first male domestic abuse champion. Men experiencing abuse may find it more difficult disclosing to women, so this is an important step.

Employers cannot be naïve to the problem of abuse: we all have an important role in tackling it.

## Julie, receptionist for a national accountancy firm and female survivor of domestic abuse

Julie was a receptionist at a large national accountancy firm. She always wore trousers or thick tights and long sleeve tops, even in the height of summer. Sometimes Julie would have bruises that she couldn't hide, even using heavy make-up.

Julie's line manager suspected she was experiencing domestic abuse at home and in a catch up meeting with Julie, she asked if everything was okay because she had seemed a bit remote, lacking concentration and very tense at work lately. Julie broke down and disclosed that her partner was often abusive to her. They had a four year old son, Thomas, and she was concerned that she wouldn't be able to cope with trying to organise child care on her own if she left her partner. She had very little family support and no friends. Julie's manager asked her how Thomas was and she said fine, her partner doted on him and he had never abused her in front of him.

Julie's manager spent time with her and discussed how the organisation could support her. She gave her numbers that she could use for assistance, as well as providing information about local specialist domestic abuse services.

She told Julie that she could speak to her confidentially anytime and asked her to get back to her once she had thought things through.

Julie hadn't realised when she disclosed that she was pregnant. The abuse was getting worse and her partner's physical attacks on her became more frequent. Julie decided to leave the relationship; she told her manager she believed her partner was capable of killing her and that she was afraid for her unborn child. Julie describes the way in which her manager and the company supported her as fantastic. The support her employer provided included:

- Giving her a new job in a different office that was not on reception, so that she would not be on view if her ex-boyfriend came looking for her there.
- Changing her shift patterns to help with childcare and also the way they paid her, so that the money would not go into their joint bank account anymore.
- With Julie's permission they let all the people that answered the phones know about her circumstances, and gave them a fixed procedure to follow should her ex-partner try to locate her.

- In addition, Julie was given time off to attend appointments and security were informed and given a picture of Julie's ex-partner.

Julie had been in touch with her local Women's Aid and, along with her employer, they helped her to arrange her child care.

Julie says:

***“My employer did everything they could to help me and protect my identity if my ex-boyfriend ever came looking for me at work. I feel safer at work now that I know my ex-partner can't easily find me. I am worried that he will come looking for me and my child, but I know my company will continue to support me if this situation arises.”***

Julie's ex-boyfriend did come looking for her but due to the precautions the company had put in place, he thought she had left the company and was unable to track her down.

(Names changed to protect identities)

## Lloyd's Banking Group

As an organisation with more than 30 million customers and 70,000 colleagues, we know that domestic abuse is likely to be something that affects many of those we work with. We wanted to play our role in identifying and addressing it, and empower colleagues to support both each other and our customers. Within Lloyds Banking Group the Group Director, Responsible Business and Inclusion is the executive sponsor of our 'supporting colleagues and customers impacted by domestic abuse' programme, which periodically updates and is governed by the Inclusion and Diversity Operations Forum and the Group Customer Vulnerability Committee.

We started really focusing on domestic abuse as an issue in 2016 when we first created our internal colleague programme. There were many strands to the project, though all our activity was brought together by our three step approach: Acknowledge, Respond, Refer (as referenced in this employer toolkit).

The aim was to enable colleagues to openly discuss this topic and ensure we were providing the necessary support and access to help through our policies, processes and resources.

HR colleagues received domestic abuse awareness training with a specialist charity, to help equip them with knowledge of how to deal with the issue and identify potential indicators. We created and distributed a leaflet explaining how colleagues could find and provide support for each other if they were experiencing domestic abuse and a specially created poster put up across all our offices and branches highlighting where colleagues can get further support. We also provided access to domestic abuse support organisations and helplines for colleagues and customers, including information on our intranet and signposting to relevant charities and resources.

One of our senior employees who had been personally impacted by domestic abuse decided to share their story through our intranet, which is accessible to every Lloyds Banking Group colleague, receiving a very positive response and becoming one of the most engaged with articles on the site this year. The article helped stimulate further conversations and disclosures around the topic: we found that once other colleagues heard this story they felt more able to come forward with their own.

The colleague reaction to our domestic abuse focus so far has been overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to taking further steps to raise awareness and understanding.

We all have a role to play in identifying and combating abuse and supporting those affected. Lloyds Banking Group is currently one of the only financial institutions which is a member of Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse and we want to encourage others in the industry to join us so we can strengthen our collective efforts.

## Paul Chivers, teacher and male survivor of domestic abuse

It is a common misconception that domestic abuse only affects women. Men are also victims of domestic abuse but there is still stigma around talking about the problem.

My former wife abused me, both physically and mentally, for over a decade. Our relationship began like any other. We were both teachers working at the same school, and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. At first she was caring, but then things started to change.

My wife would lock me out of the house or leave me on the side of the road, miles from home with no money; I was locked out of the house around 60 times over the course of almost 10 years. She'd take my wallet and keys so I had no way of getting home.

I found myself walking on eggshells, being coerced into situations I really didn't want to be in. She often told me I would never see my daughter again if I didn't do what she wanted. Despite all of this, I felt I couldn't leave the family home for the sake of our daughter.

The time came to leave her when she split my head open after smashing a hair dryer over my head. At this point I realised I had to take action, and it marked the beginning of a 12 month legal process.

My colleagues at the school where I worked knew about the issues I was facing and were very supportive. After the attack, the school offered me time off to recover and paid for my counselling, followed by further time off to appear in court. This allowed me to give vital evidence of the abuse I had been suffering for nearly a decade.

The school also still paid me my full wage, allowing me to be financially independent. This carried on for the best part of a year, and was crucial to my survival as I immediately went from being in a dual salary relationship to being a single salary dad. Most importantly, the school made me feel valued as a staff member.

Before my troubles reached their peak, there was no specific policy in place to deal with domestic abuse faced by staff. (Despite this, my school and the staff were hugely supportive.) Staff were previously aware of how to recognise signs of abuse towards children, but are now aware that this can be a major issue for colleagues too.

It's important to remember that many people experiencing abuse feel ashamed of their situation and don't want to draw attention to it. This can be particularly true for male survivors. It can feel hard for some people, particularly men, to report domestic abuse. But my situation shows that you will be taken seriously and given the right support. I would encourage any other victims to contact organisations like the ManKind Initiative and the police, who can help put a stop to the abuse.



## Peter, male survivor of domestic abuse

Peter had recently started a new job as a senior lawyer when a difficult and volatile relationship with his husband exploded into violence. Struggling to cope under the pressure, he became erratic at work. On the eve of an important business meeting with senior management, Peter suffered a severe beating at the hands of his partner. In the office he shouted at colleagues, and was reprimanded by the head of HR.

At this point he felt unable to reveal what was going on in his private life. As a result, he was stuck with a reputation for being short-tempered and erratic, even though his work was consistently of a high standard. “People made assumptions about who I was, without considering what might have caused me to behave in this way,” he says. “This was despite the fact that they knew I had been successful in senior positions in other companies.”

Peter’s company introduced an executive coaching scheme, and he felt able to share his experience of being subjected to domestic violence for the first time. “When we started talking, my coach got more than he bargained for,” recalls Peter. “Everything changed; it was amazing just to be able to have that conversation.”

His colleagues’ attitude towards him improved dramatically, says Peter. “They were sympathetic, but also they started judging me on the standard of my work, rather than on my past behaviour.” He took part in counselling sessions, arranged through the company’s Employee Assistance Programme. “It did really help, but it was just the beginning of a process.”

Peter still feels that it would be difficult to disclose instances of domestic abuse to a colleague at work, particularly for a man. “It is difficult for people to understand that a guy could be subject to that kind of attack. I think that it’s good to share what you are going through, but it has got to be at the right time.”

Peter is now in a new relationship, and enjoying life at home and at work.

(Name changed to protect identity)

## Rachel, female survivor of domestic abuse

***A letter from an employer reveals the devastating impact that domestic abuse has within a business and on colleagues, as well as to the person directly experiencing abuse.***

Rachel, who experienced domestic abuse for many years, made the letter from a former employer public to help organisations understand how to recognise the early signs of domestic abuse and to consider how they can best support employees.

The letter was originally written to support Rachel as she prepared for a court case concerning an incident of domestic abuse. It graphically illustrates the control exerted by her former partner over her daily life and lists the steps that were taken to support her and her colleagues in the workplace.

Written by the hair salon where Rachel once worked as a junior stylist, it recognises the high standard of her work and her commitment to the job. The salon says that she carried out her duties despite being subjected to intimidation by her former partner, which also left her

colleagues living in fear. He did not allow her to work with male colleagues or to cut the hair of men or lesbians. He often made surprise visits to the salon and checked the appointments book.

One particular day when Rachel was the only stylist available to cut a man's hair, all the salon's trainees were asked to circle around her and the client to block any view from the street. "The fear of her getting caught was tangible and the whole salon was on pins," the salon said in the letter.

Rachel made the letter public to encourage organisations to consider the risk of domestic abuse to their employees, as well as how to recognise the early signs and what steps can be taken to give the support they will need. Doing nothing is simply not an option, she says.

"Domestic abuse can affect anybody," she says. "There is no such thing as a 'typical' victim. Employers and line managers can make a huge difference by knowing how to recognise the early signs and knowing how to respond. They may even save someone's life."

Rachel was the victim of domestic abuse for almost 18 years. In 2011 her husband Darren stormed into the salon where she was working and shot her at point blank range. He then took his own life. Miraculously, Rachel survived the attack and has become a campaigner to raise awareness of the risks of domestic abuse.

## Santander

At Santander, our employees reflect the communities we work in, so we know things that affect the community also affect our people.

In the last couple of years we've experienced an increase in the number of colleagues speaking out and seeking support for domestic abuse. To help managers and colleagues, we've developed clear guidelines about how to help those affected.

We have an integrated approach to colleague health, safety and wellbeing; and our combined policy statement commits us to supporting colleagues through challenging times, even when it's not work related. We provide an Employee Assistance Programme, as well as Personal Support Services through our partners, the Bank Workers Charity.

### Clare's story

Clare is a well-liked, bubbly colleague, who works in a high street Santander branch. When she got a new boyfriend she was excited to share the news. But after a couple of months, Clare became less talkative; she looked tired and didn't seem to make as much effort with her appearance.

One day Clare called in upset, explaining that she'd lost her keys and was locked out. She told Martin, her manager, that she was waiting for her mum to arrive with her spare and would be in later. The next day Clare came in with a large bruise on her cheek. She said the spare key had been stiff in the lock, and when she leaned against the door to force it, she stumbled inside banging her face on a table.

Soon after, Clare asked Martin if she could reduce her lunch break, in order to leave work a bit earlier due to new commitments. She also had two further accidents in a short space of time.

Martin was increasingly concerned by the changes in Clare. When he asked if she was ok, she broke down and told him that her new partner was abusing her. Her partner had taken her house keys and moved in, locked her out at night, and used her credit card to buy things she could not afford. Her partner insisted on knowing where Clare was at all times, and expected her home at a certain time. When Clare was unable to meet his demands he became violent.

Clare said her partner had charmed her parents and, as she held their spare keys, he had threatened to harm them if she spoke out. Clare told Martin he was the only person who knew; Martin was shocked and very worried for her safety. He called Santander's Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW) team for help and advice.

HSW provided Martin with a copy of Santander's Domestic Abuse Guidelines to read and share with Clare. HSW spoke to Clare directly, assuring her that everything was confidential and no action would be taken without her consent; they emphasised that she would always be in control of what happened.

(Names changed to protect identities)

***Continued overleaf***

## Santander continued

Clare was urged to contact an independent organisation for professional advice and support, while Santander supported her at work. She was also told about the Guardian Support System that Santander could put in place for a 24/7 police response, if she felt in danger. The business could also relocate her to another branch and provide an alias name badge.

By calling Santander's EAP, Clare accessed immediate telephone counselling and was referred for face-to-face support. She was also encouraged to contact the Bank Workers Charity, who could help with advice and practical things like relocation and changing locks, and put her in touch with organisations like Refuge.

Martin provided Clare with invaluable moral support while she considered her options. When Clare made the decision to go to the police, HSW worked with Santander's Security Team to implement the Guardian Support System. When her partner was arrested, Clare was temporarily moved to a new branch and given a different name badge for her safety. Refuge supported Clare while she told her parents about what had been happening.

Clare is now back at her original branch, having moved home. A court injunction prevents her ex-partner from coming near her or trying to contact her. Had Martin not spoken to Clare and helped her find the courage to speak out, allowing her to get the support she needed, her story may have been very different.

## The Hampton Trust

### Sara Kirkpatrick, Services Development Manager, Respect

The Hampton Trust, a domestic abuse and violence charity based in Hampshire, runs a voluntary programme to support perpetrators to address their behaviour and make changes. Attendance is sometimes recommended by Children's Services.

Perpetrators attend an assessment and acknowledge they have been abusive and show motivation to change and attend the course.

However, it can be difficult for a perpetrator who is working full-time to attend the course, which takes place on a weekday between 6.30pm and 8.30pm, particularly so when their job involves shifts or overtime.

The support of an employer can therefore be critical in helping a perpetrator through rehabilitation. The Hampton Trust communicates directly with the employer (with consent), giving a start date and end date for the course. The employer is then able to make appropriate adjustment, such as changing a shift pattern, knowing that it is only a temporary arrangement.

Sara Kirkpatrick, Services Development Manager at Respect, of which The Hampton Trust is a member, said this was a good model of how an employer can respond productively and proactively.

"At this point the police are unlikely to be involved, so a perpetrator has not been sanctioned and is not being compelled to attend. So it is really helpful when an employer provides this kind of support."

The employer's commitment in writing also reassures the person attending the course that this temporary arrangement will remain in place even if there are changes in personnel at work.

Ms Kirkpatrick said: "This is a simple step, but can make a significant difference to a family."



## West Midlands' Police

### Chief Inspector Sally Simpson

Police officers are well accustomed to supporting those who experience domestic abuse, and taking action against perpetrators.

But it's important to remember that police officers themselves can also experience domestic abuse, and require support in the same way as anyone else. Equally, police employees who commit domestic abuse related offences should be treated no differently to any other suspect.

This was the premise behind West Midlands' Police's domestic abuse campaign, which launched in July 2016 at the Force Leadership Conference.

To launch the campaign we used anonymous voices of real victims, including both a male and female police officer, a community officer, and a 999 call handling supervisor, to show the broad spectrum of victims in our organisation.

Every single member of the West Midlands' Police force Senior leadership team (the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constable, and all Chief Superintendents and Department Heads) signed a pledge to "draw a blue line under abuse", formalising their support. The campaign was backed by all our senior leadership, as well as supporting associations including The Police Federation, Unite, Unison, The Black and Asian Police Association, Women in Policing and the LGBT network.

The specific changes we made included refreshing our internal policy. We focused on the importance of recognising the workplace as both a place of safety and a place of potential risk, highlighting to supervisors and managers the need to recognise the signs and not be afraid to have a conversation with an employee that focuses on their well-being. We also created internal staff web pages that gave advice on what steps those experiencing domestic abuse could take, how supervisors should handle cases of domestic abuse within the force and what colleagues should do if they suspected someone of using abusive behaviour.

Following the launch of this campaign at the Force Leadership Conference, we developed a further campaign which launched around Christmas. Called 'remove the mask', it aimed to show that police employees face the same risks and issues as other people. The campaign was fronted by the former Officer whose voice we also used at the Force Leadership Conference as a survivor of domestic abuse.

The 'remove the mask' campaign stressed that police officers were part of the alarmingly high statistics around those experiencing domestic abuse. We wanted to encourage all victims to therefore 'remove the mask' and tell someone.

The response from our colleagues to all this activity was overwhelmingly positive. We had many survivors who came forward to say they were so pleased to see the police facing this issue head on.

## Thank you to the following for contributing to the development of this toolkit:

### Project team:

- [Business in the Community](#)
- [National Grid](#)
- [Public Health England](#)

### Advisory group:

- [Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence](#)
- Davina James-Hanman, independent Violence Against Women Consultant
- [Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#)
- [ManKind](#)
- [Refuge](#)
- [SafeLives](#)
- [Stonewall Housing](#)
- [Tavistock Relationships](#)
- [TecSOS](#)
- [West Midlands Police](#)
- [Women's Aid](#)

### Case studies:

- [Gentoo Group](#)
- [Gowling WLG](#)
- [Lloyds Banking Group](#)
- Paul Chivers
- [Santander](#)
- [The Hampton Trust](#)
- [West Midlands Police](#)
- [Women's Aid](#)

### Peer reviewers:

- [Dr Fiona Adshead](#)  
Health expert and member of BITC's Wellbeing Leadership Team
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Home Office](#)
- [Leigh Day](#)
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- [University of Exeter](#)
- [West Midlands Police](#)

### Pilot testing businesses:

- [Barclays](#)
- [Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- [Leon](#)
- [Shiva Foundation](#)
- [Tolgate Coffee Ltd](#)
- [United St Saviour's Charity](#)

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**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY**

## Resources for employers

Business in the Community and Public Health England have developed a range of toolkits to support employers with employee health and wellbeing:



**Domestic abuse: a toolkit for employers**



**THE PRINCE'S  
RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS NETWORK**