



employers'
initiative
on domestic abuse

Domestic abuse:
**A guide for
everyone**

Our organisation is committed to **creating a safe and supportive workplace**. As part of that, we have a workplace domestic abuse response. For it to be effective, it is important that everyone understands the scope of domestic abuse, the support that is available and how to access it, and how to respond if a colleague shares that they are impacted by domestic abuse.

Our workplace domestic abuse response

- We do not tolerate domestic abuse.
- We are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment where all employees feel confident to disclose their experiences and be believed and helped.
- We have a workplace policy that sets out our commitment to those impacted by domestic abuse and explains the support available and how to access it.
- We are committed to supporting employees impacted by domestic abuse and continuously work to improve our response.

You are not expected to be an expert in domestic abuse

It's important to say from the outset: as an employee you are not expected to be an expert in domestic abuse. What matters most is that you have an awareness of domestic abuse, and know what resources are available and where to get support, or where to direct someone else for support.

Your awareness contributes to the development of a workplace environment that encourages people to come forward. By creating a culture of support and empathy, where people feel believed and not judged, we can empower those impacted by domestic abuse to speak out and seek the support they need.

Key facts about domestic abuse

Domestic abuse affects people of all backgrounds, regardless of age, gender, race, socio-economic status, or their role or seniority. It includes coercive and controlling behaviour, and economic and verbal abuse, as well as physical violence.



Prevalence: 1 in 4 women, 1 in 7 men and 1 in 6/7 transgender people experience domestic abuse in their lifetimes. This means it is highly likely that colleagues in our organisation are experiencing domestic abuse today. It also means that we are likely to have people who abuse family members within our organisation.



Impact on work: Domestic abuse impacts all aspects of someone's life including at work, affecting overall wellbeing and potentially having a negative impact on their ability to concentrate, their performance and their attendance at work.



Barriers to Disclosure: Fear of the abuser, fear of not being believed, shame, and concerns about job security often prevent people from seeking help. Some people may not recognise that they are being abused where the abusive behaviour has become normalised.



Recognising the signs

Every situation is different and there are many reasons your colleagues might show some or more of the following signs without them being related to domestic abuse. However, possible signs of domestic abuse extending into the workplace are:

- Regular interruptions from a current or former partner or family member at work, including phone calls, texts, or emails, and them turning up at the workplace or at external events uninvited or unexpectedly
- Regular or sudden absenteeism, including medical problems, or arriving late/leaving work early without explanation
- An obsession with leaving work on time or anxious if asked to stay late
- Requesting an increased number of hours at work for no reason, and a reluctance to go home
- Appearing isolated from family, friends, colleagues, and social networks
- Sudden and sustained changes in behaviour or performance at work (for example, becoming quiet, withdrawn, emotional, or angry)
- Unusual changes in appearance (for example, heavy clothing in the summer, long sleeves and/or heavy make-up)
- Injuries with inconsistent or no explanation
- Fatigue or sleep disorders.

If you have concerns about someone, ask if they are okay or would like to talk

If you have concerns that someone may be experiencing domestic abuse, don't hesitate to ask them how they are. Your interest and care can make all the difference. Many victim-survivors say they are waiting for someone to ask if they're okay. By starting the conversation, you're not only offering support, but you may also be providing the opportunity for someone to break their silence. It's far better to express concern than to leave someone feeling isolated and unheard.

If you have concerns that someone may be experiencing domestic abuse, don't hesitate to ask them how they are.

What to do if a colleague tells you they are experiencing difficulties in a relationship that could be abuse

Your most important response is to listen. Aim to:

- Be non-judgmental, empathetic and supportive.
- Believe a colleague when they tell you about their experiences.
- Acknowledge that it takes immense courage and strength to tell someone.
- Be aware that they may not recognise these difficulties as abuse.
- Reassure them that the abuse isn't their fault and they aren't to blame.
- Ask them how you can help or what support they need. They know their situation best and how to keep themselves safe.
- Share the details of the situation only on a need-to-know basis. If there is a threat to life, then you must act (call 999) and it will not be possible to keep all details confidential so don't promise to keep it a secret.
- Signpost them to the support available in our organisation and/or to external support.

Choose your words carefully — but don't worry if you get it wrong

You might not always pick the right words. But remember it's better to express your concern, even if your choice of words is not perfect, than to remain silent. The impact of your caring words outweighs any potential discomfort. Victim-survivors often say that the simple act of someone acknowledging their struggle makes a significant impact. But victim-survivors do suggest that you are careful about the language you use. Try to avoid expressing personal opinions or unsolicited advice, and avoid language that indicates blame or fault such as questions like "Why don't you just leave?" or "Why haven't you told anyone before?".

You might not always pick the right words. But remember it's better to express your concern, even if your choice of words is not perfect, than to remain silent.



Signposts to further support

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

If there is no immediate danger, but you or someone else needs support: Signpost them to the support available within our organisation or to a domestic abuse helpline or service.

Domestic abuse helplines and services

There is an extensive range of specialist helplines and support services available for those experiencing domestic abuse. There are local and national services specialising in providing support for people based on their gender identity, heritage, sexual orientation, or disability, and for different types of domestic abuse.

Remember, if you are calling on behalf of someone else, you need their consent. They might not be ready to talk to a domestic abuse service, they may have just wanted to tell someone.

For the service that meets your requirements most closely, visit the EIDA Directory of Support Services web page:

www.eida.org.uk/resources/directory-support-services

If you need immediate help because a colleague has told you that they are being abused, you can contact:

Hestia Respond to Abuse Advice Line
on 020 3879 3695

Adviceline.EB@hestia.org

This service is provided by specialist charity Hestia and is available to any business or organisation in the UK that would like free support, guidance, or information about domestic abuse and how to support employees.

Find support using the Bright Sky app

Bright Sky is a free app for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or worried about someone else. It helps to spot the signs, suggests how to respond, and provides direct links and phone numbers for support local to you. You can download it onto your mobile phone from the app store or access the website version here: www.hestia.org/brightsky.

If you, or someone you know is concerned that an abuser may have gained access to their phones or devices, Women's Aid has information on **Cover your tracks online** www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/cover-your-tracks-online/.

Together, we can make a difference

By creating an environment of support and understanding, we aim to support all those impacted by domestic abuse.





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