**Domestic Abuse Policy – ‘Sharon’s Policy’**

**Guidance Notes for Employers and Line Managers**

Dear Employer,

Thank you for taking this important step in helping to safeguard your employees from domestic abuse.

When I was living with an abuser my employer didn’t realise the extent of what I was going through or understand how best to fully support me.

I’ve used my experience to help create this domestic abuse policy and I’m proud that it carries my name. I want other people to hear my story and to take effective action.

By adopting a domestic abuse policy in your workplace, you are helping to end the misconception that ‘what happens at home isn’t our business.’ It *is* our business, and we should all feel a responsibility to help those who feel afraid or unable to speak out. Employers have a duty of care to their employees; the statutory guidance accompanying the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 makes clear that employers should consider the impact of domestic abuse on employees as part of that duty of care.

I urge you to use this policy and these guidance notes as part of your overall workplace response to domestic abuse. It is important that you also continue to raise awareness of the scope and prevalence of domestic abuse and encourage your people to come forward and seek support.

Thank you for taking a stand against domestic abuse and for making a commitment to helping anyone in your workforce who may be suffering, to cope and recover from their ordeal.

Thank you for making a difference.

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**Sharon’s story**

*It was 2012 when I met the man who planned to take my life. I had two children, aged 9 and 7 and I was working full time as a recruitment consultant, a job I still love today. I was Sharon. A lover of life, a strong woman, never without a smile and always doing my best to help others. I was considered smart and successful. There is a common misconception that intelligent women or women in high powered jobs do not become victims of abuse.*

*At the time I thought I was living in a fairy tale; I’d finally found my knight in shining armour. A man who filled me with compliments, who understood my job, my life, and wanted to give me the world. The reality was, he was a man who had spotted my vulnerabilities and preyed on them like an animal.*

*My abuser thrived on confrontational behaviour and, with every disagreement between us, the level of his physical and emotional abuse deepened. Over time I lost myself completely. I was forced to dye my hair, wear the clothes he wanted me to wear, and my social life disappeared.*

*He verbally abused me in my place of work - calling me constantly and showing up uninvited at work events. My love for my children gave me the courage to finally seek help. I shared my story for the first time with my employer and a friend which resulted in his arrest. Despite the overwhelming list of abuse, he had committed he was released from custody. It was during those few days after his release he carefully planned out my abduction and, as evidence suggests, my murder.*

*In November 2015, I left work with an old colleague. We had a running joke that hers was always the one car left in the carpark with a windscreen that needed clearing. On this particular evening, as fate would have it, her car was clear and she left the car park before me, leaving me wondering why my car was steamed up.*

*My senses were sharp that night. I smelt aftershave in the air, and, for some reason, I felt compelled to reach under my drivers’ seat where I found a picnic blanket that was usually in the boot of my car. My blood ran cold, and I instinctively got out my car and opened the boot to find my abuser lying in wait, armed with a knife. I fled the scene screaming, hoping to alert anyone still at the business park. I was literally running for my life. Fortunately, one of my colleagues came to my assistance and my abuser fled the scene. He was found by the police, convicted, and imprisoned for seven years. This is where our physical story ends. However, the emotional trauma he left behind ran deep, long after these events, and I needed further support when he was recently released from prison.*

*In the aftermath, I drew most comfort from finding myself again. Of course, that took time - I had survived being treated in a way that many wouldn’t even be able to imagine. But if you can live through that and survive it, you will find your strength again.*

*My survival of abuse gave me the courage to set up my own company,* [*Kameo Recruitment*](https://www.kameorecruitment.com/)*, in 2018, which I used as a platform to raise awareness of domestic abuse - the many forms it takes, and how to identify a victim in the workplace. In January 2023, I created a separate business – Domestic Abuse Education to help equip businesses with the knowledge and resources to safeguard employees experiencing abuse. I am also a proud ambassador for the* [*Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse*](https://www.eida.org.uk/) *and the* [*Domestic Abuse Alliance*](https://domestic-abuse.co.uk/)*.*

*Today, I can honestly say I love my life and I’m proud to say I’ve found myself again. The Sharon I told you about at the beginning of this story is back and she’s not going anywhere. I want to live my life to the fullest, while I can, and you should too.*



1. **Introduction**

As far as is reasonably practicable, employers must ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees at work. It is important that all new and existing employees are made aware that the Company has a Domestic Abuse Policy and that the Company will provide help and support should an individual ever need it.

Employers who adopt a Domestic Abuse Policy also make a commitment to keep up to date with changes to domestic abuse and workplace legislation, and to support Line Managers to undertake appropriate workplace training.

These Guidance Notes refer to a template Policy which may be a useful starting point for employers that are seeking to implement a Domestic Abuse Policy for the first time. You are welcome to adapt and use the template Policy within your organisation free of charge. You may wish to have a stand-alone domestic abuse policy, or to incorporate it into an existing policy, for example, on health and wellbeing.

Whatever the approach, the Company should ensure that the relevant policy is widely publicised to employees and easily available. You are encouraged to review your other policies to ensure that they consider domestic abuse, including those on sickness and absence, performance, paid and/or unpaid leave, as well as your disciplinary procedures.

As per the square bracketed wording within the template Policy, we encourage employers to draft their domestic abuse policy as broadly as possible, so as to apply to the entire workforce, including employees, workers, and independent contractors. The key differences between these categories of staff are as follows:

* Employees are entitled to all employment rights (subject to their length of service).
* Workers are entitled to some employment rights, such as protection against discrimination, but may be engaged on a casual basis (i.e. do not have a right to be offered or an obligation to perform work) and in comparison, with employees may have more flexibility over when, how much and where they work.
* Independent contractors are in business for themselves, delivering a service to the company and as such, generally do not have any employment rights.

Drafting a domestic abuse policy to apply to all these categories of staff sends a clear message that the employer will support any staff member who needs help, regardless of employment status. However, it is acknowledged that it may not be feasible for all employers to take this approach, in which case it may be more appropriate for the policy to apply to employees only. Please adjust the Policy as you see fit for your workplace.

1. **What is domestic abuse?**

Domestic abuse is defined within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the "Act").

Within the Act, domestic abuse is referred to as abusive behaviour which one person exhibits towards another. It must take place between two individuals aged 16 years or over who are connected to each other. This could, for example, include individuals who are (or previously have been) married or in a civil partnership or an intimate personal relationship, or who have a child together. This is regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It could include individuals who are related to each other.

Children are also recognised as victims of domestic abuse if they witness or experience the effects of domestic abuse of one parent by another.

This behaviour can be a single incident, or a pattern of behaviour. Behaviour is considered abusive if it consists of any of the following:

* physical or sexual abuse
* violent or threatening behaviour
* controlling or coercive behaviour
* economic abuse; and
* psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of their gender identity, sex, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, or background.

1. **Examples of abusive behaviours**

* **Controlling behaviour** can be a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
* **Coercive behaviour** is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.
* **Post-separation abuse** is domestic abuse that takes place after a relationship has ended. Controlling or coercive behaviour after a relationship ends and that took place after 5 April 2023 is a criminal offence – the perpetrator and employee no longer have to be in a relationship or living together when the behaviour occurred. Signs that an employee may be experiencing post-separation abuse can include their perpetrator showing up to the workplace or to staff social events unexpectedly.
* **Economic (including financial) abuse** means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on an individual’s ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property or obtain goods or services. In the workplace, for example, this could amount to controlling working hours or someone’s ability to participate in work-related activities; making the victim late for work or controlling their travel to or from work; and/or isolating the victim from colleagues.
* **Technology-facilitated abuse** involves the use of technology to perpetrate domestic abuse and has become increasingly common. Mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets can be misused to stalk, harass, impersonate, and threaten victims. The growing use of internet-connected home devices (such as smart speakers) may also provide perpetrators with a wider and more sophisticated range of tools to track and harm their victims. Employers should remain vigilant about the different forms of technology that employees have access to within the workplace or when they are working from home, which could be targeted by a perpetrator and prevent the employee from carrying out their role effectively. In the workplace, some examples of technology-facilitated abuse include, hacking into, monitoring, or controlling email accounts, coercing the victim to share their passwords, limiting or controlling access to the internet or other equipment, or using GPS locators on items such as phones and computers.
* **Spiritual abuse**, which is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, which may be perpetrated (but not exclusively) in a religious context.
* Domestic abuse can also include so called 'honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

When responding to domestic abuse, it is important to understand that employers are not expected to become “experts” or solve the problem of domestic abuse, but to provide support to their employees. The three key steps are:

* **Recognising** and acknowledging the problem in a supportive, non-judgmental way.
* **Responding** appropriately to employees who share that they are experiencing domestic abuse.
* **Referring** the employee to appropriate help and specialist support.

1. **Recognising and acknowledging the problem**

It may be difficult to spot the signs of domestic abuse as it is often a ‘hidden’ crime. Some signs may include:

* Regular interruptions from a current or ex-partner/family member at work including phone calls, texts, emails and turning up at the workplace or at external events. Employees may feel they must respond immediately to these interruptions for fear of retribution.
* Gifts sent to an employee by current or ex-partner for no apparent reason.
* An employee displaying defensive behaviour or being overly secretive about their private life.
* Regular or sudden absenteeism including medical problems or arriving late/leaving work early without explanation.
* Obsession with leaving work on time.
* Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
* An employee appearing isolated from family and social networks.
* Sudden and sustained changes in behaviour or performance at work (e.g., becoming quiet, withdrawn, emotional, or angry).
* Reduced quantity or quality of work.
* Lack of or monitoring of access to the internet and/or work equipment when working from home.
* Depression, insomnia, or fatigue.
* Substance use/dependence, which may be used to cope with the abuse.
* Changes in appearance which could include heavy clothing in the summer, long sleeves and/or heavy makeup, which may be used to cover injuries.
* Injuries with inconsistent or no explanation.
* An employee not wanting to engage with colleagues, including during lunch breaks and on social occasions.
* Insufficient resources, which may indicate financial abuse.
* Uncharacteristic change in religious or cultural behaviour at the request of a partner.

It is important to note that many of the above indicators may not be related to domestic abuse and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. This is not an exhaustive list and please be mindful that indicators may appear at any time, as victims/survivors may experience post-separation abuse.

1. **Disclosure**

Consider nominating at least two appointed people within the workplace as a confidential first point of contact for those experiencing domestic abuse. Bear in mind that those experiencing domestic abuse may prefer to disclose to someone of the same gender. Taking a person-centred approach means that care and support focuses on the specific needs of the individual. Consider sharing with all your employees a non-verbal signal that they can use on a video conference call to sign that they may need help.

There are many reasons why an employee experiencing domestic abuse might find it hard to disclose.

These include:

* A fear of not being believed.
* A fear of the perpetrator finding out about the disclosure.
* Not recognising that they are experiencing abuse.
* A fear of making things worse or of being judged.
* Feeling embarrassed, humiliated, and ashamed.
* A fear of the impact on their professional standing.
* A belief that the abuse is in some way their fault.
* Concerns about confidentiality.

1. **Clare’s Law**

It may be useful to remind employees, regardless of gender, of their rights under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as “Clare’s Law”. This enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner’s or ex-partner’s previous abusive or violent offending. The aim of this law is to give individuals information regarding their current or ex-partner as to whether they have a history of violence and abusive offending that may pose a risk.

The scheme has two elements: the “Right to Ask” and the “Right to Know.” Under the scheme an individual or relevant third party (for example, a family member) can ask the police to check whether a current or ex-partner has a violent or abusive past. This is the “Right to Ask.” If records show that an individual may be at risk of domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner, the police will consider disclosing the information.

The “Right to Know” enables the police to make a disclosure on their own initiative if they receive information about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may impact on the safety of that person’s current or ex-partner. This could be information arising from a criminal investigation, through statutory or third sector agency involvement, or from another source of police intelligence.

1. **Responding appropriately to disclosure**

It is a good idea to identify a ‘quiet area’ within the building, which can be used to have confidential conversations, should someone wish to disclose private, sensitive information. This may not always be possible depending on the size of the premises so a private off-site location may need to be sought.

When speaking with an employee who is disclosing domestic abuse you should:

* Acknowledge the employee’s courage and the difficulties they must be facing.
* Maintain an open posture.
* Use non-threatening questions to open conversations – examples could be: “How are you feeling?”, “How are things in your life?”
* Be prepared for the employee to be upset and tearful.
* Allow plenty of time and space for the employee to explain matters.
* Recognise that everyone's circumstances and experiences will be different.
* Adopt a supportive tone reflecting an open work culture where individuals feel safe to disclose issues of domestic abuse.
* Do not be judgmental and avoid language that indicates blame or fault (“Why don’t you just leave?” / “How can you let this happen?” / “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”)
* Keep the language gender neutral and don't make assumptions about the gender of someone's partner.
* Be aware of the parameters of your role and make clear what support you can and cannot provide.
* Refrain from giving advice to the employee – for example do not pressurise them into leaving without seeking appropriate specialist advice as this can increase risk.
* Signpost employees to appropriate onward support. Some options are provided below.

If an employee has made a disclosure of domestic abuse, asking the following questions can help to ensure an appropriate safety plan is put in place:

* What support would the employee find helpful (there is no one-size-fits all)?
* Does the perpetrator know where the employee works?
* Does the perpetrator work for the same organisation?
* Has the employee been followed on their way to/from work?
* Is the employee experiencing abuse whilst they are at work. For example, is the perpetrator visiting the workplace?
* Does the perpetrator have their work contact details i.e., a direct telephone number or email address?
* Are they happy for information to be shared with colleagues to ensure any changes are implemented and a safe response can be coordinated?

Employers should have due regard to other members of the workforce who may be triggered by a colleague’s disclosure of abuse and offer appropriate support.

1. **Flexibility**

This guidance recognises that it may not be possible or appropriate for employers to extend unlimited paid or unpaid leave to employees experiencing domestic abuse. However, it is recommended that employers look at each case individually and create a work plan that meets the needs of the employee and the business. This could include temporary adjustments to the employee’s work patterns, hours or duties, as well as temporary flexible working arrangements outside of those offered as part of the employer’s formal flexible working policy. For example, it might be that the employee can have a shorter lunch break to make up any required absences i.e., for counselling or legal appointments.

An employee may need to use sick leave in the event they have sustained injuries requiring time off, or they are struggling with their personal mental health.

It is important to remember that:

* Employees may want to attend work whilst dealing with the impact of their abuse. It is important that employers recognise this and work with their employees to create a suitable working pattern.
* Employees might need additional flexibility around their working pattern than is usually required, so that their perpetrator cannot track their movements if they have left the relationship. It is also important to check that the employee has a safe route to work/home.
* Employees may wish to work in the office on a full-time basis, rather than working from home, so provisions for this may be required if there is limited desk space, owing to hybrid working.
* If an employee is working from home, their line manager should check in with them remotely on a regular basis and it is often useful to agree on a communication plan. However, employers should acknowledge that the employee may not be able to speak freely at home. Therefore, it may be appropriate to discuss a preferred method of communication i.e., a non-verbal signal, with the employee, to ensure they can communicate in private. The employer may also be able to help establish safe communication channels by providing a new work email address or phone number, for example.
* If an employee is asked to attend court to give evidence or to secure an injunction, consider allowing them to take this as compassionate leave. They may also need time to make alternative housing or childcare arrangements, and to attend appointments with solicitors or specialist support services.
* Children are often the ones who are impacted by domestic abuse and may need counselling to help them cope and recover. Children can also be direct victims of domestic abuse and may require additional support because of this. Some school and charities offer this support, but it is often provided during standard working hours. If parents/guardians are asked to attend, consider allowing them to mark this absence as compassionate/dependent’s leave.
* Employers should be aware of the impact that domestic abuse may have on work performance and attendance. In the event of absence management processes or redundancy selection matrices, any absence or performance concerns related to domestic abuse should not be used in the scoring process.

This list is not exhaustive, and employees should be encouraged to let their line manager and/or HR know what adjustments may be helpful for them.

**Ideas about support**

These are some other points to consider:

* If the employee has a work number/mobile and is being harassed, consider changing their number if possible.
* Ask the employee for an emergency contact should the organisation be unable to contact them. Allow the employee to move to a different office/location to work, especially if they are in visible positions i.e., Reception.
* Ensure the employee does not work alone or in isolated areas.
* Agree a safe and confidential method of communication with the employee, for example, email or face to face communication, which may be safer than phone calls or letters to the home).
* Where phone calls are necessary, it may be helpful to identify a phrase whereby the employee can indicate if they are not safe to talk.
* Review the employee’s next of kin information – the perpetrator may still be listed.
* Set up security cameras in public entrances and in the area where the employee works (subject to the requirements of the UK GDPR).
* With consent from the employee, alert reception and security staff and create a plan of action should the perpetrator be seen on the premises. Provide them with a copy of any existing non-molestation/restraining orders, a photo of the perpetrator, and details of the perpetrator’s vehicle.
* If an employee discloses abuse, they could be experiencing financial abuse, where their salary is paid into the perpetrator’s bank account or a joint bank account. Having access to funds can be crucial when escaping from domestic abuse. If the employee consents, involving an appointed member of the payroll team may allow for more flexibility in assisting the employee, for example by allowing for:
  + a salary advance to deal with emergency liquidity issues.
  + changing bank account details for salary or emergency funds payments; and/or
  + a loan or one-off payment to assist the employee to become financially and physically independent from the perpetrator.

**Written records**

It is essential that those with management responsibilities keep a written record of conversations with employees about domestic abuse, any incidents within the workplace and any workplace adjustments which have been made. These may be called upon as evidence in a civil or criminal court. These records need to be clear, accurate and should give dates, times, and locations. They should be factual and not include assumptions or the views of the person making the record. Witnesses to incidents related to the domestic abuse should also be recorded.

Under data protection law, the employee has the right to view all records relating to them, so ensure that all notes are clearly factual and do not contain opinions or additional information not disclosed in the meeting(s). Employers should ensure that records comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR. Some details are likely to amount to special categories data, to which additional requirements apply.

1. **Refer to appropriate help and support**

If you believe an employee and/or members of their family are in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

**The National Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline (run by Refuge) is a freephone support line for anyone experiencing domestic abuse. Tel: 0808 2000 247. Visit:** [**www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk**](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)**.**

Here are some links to other national organisations who can provide useful information and support:

* **Age UK** supports older people and victims of elder abuse.Advice Line: 0800 678 1602. Visit: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk).
* **Ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately)**, and safe spaces, a safe space scheme using a codeword that enables victims of domestic abuse to ask discreetly for immediate help in participating pharmacies and Jobcentres. [Find your nearest Ask for ANI provider](https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/get-support/ask-for-ani)
* **AWRC**, provide a domestic abuse and advocacy service to women in need in the following languages: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Hinko, Konkani, Marathi, Pashto, Patwari, Punjabi, Urdu, [www.asianwomencentre.org.uk](http://www.asianwomencentre.org.uk)
* **Bright Sky**, a safe, easy to use app and website that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic abuse, including local support. Visit: [www.bright-sky.org.uk](https://www.bright-sky.org.uk)
* **Domestic Abuse Alliance**, provide civil legal support to anyone experiencing domestic abuse, to ensure that the appropriate legal assistance and protection is actioned, without delay. Helpline: 0800 1010 7110. Visit: [www.domestic-abuse.co.uk](http://www.domestic-abuse.co.uk)
* **Hestia**, ‘The Respond to Abuse’ advice line for employers. Helpline: 0203 8793695. Email: [Adviceline.EB@hestia.org](mailto:Adviceline.EB@hestia.org). Visit: <https://www.hestia.org/respond-to-abuse>
* **Hourglass**, a specialist organisation aiming to end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK. Helpline: 0808 808 8141. Text: 07860 052906. Email [helpline@wearehourglass.org](mailto:helpline@wearehourglass.org).
* **IKWRO**, provide specialist advice and help to Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls at risk of ‘honour’ based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and domestic abuse. Visit: [www.ikwro.org.uk](http://www.ikwro.org.uk/)
* **Jewish Women’s Aid**, support Jewish women and children affected by domestic and sexual abuse and violence. [www.jwa.org.uk](http://www.jwa.org.uk)
* **Loving Me** – a specialist organisation providing one-to-one online support and advocacy for high-risk Transgender, Gender Queer and Non-Binary victims of domestic abuse. Tel: 07902 478958. Email: [help@lovingme.uk](mailto:help@lovingme.uk). Visit: [www.lovingme.uk](http://www.lovingme.uk).
* **ManKind Initiative**, a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse. Helpline: 0808 800 1170. Visit: [www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)
* **The Men’s Advice Line**, for male domestic abuse survivors. Tel: 0808 801 0327 (run by Respect). Visit: [www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)
* **The Mix**, free information and support for under 25s in the UK. Tel: 0808 808 4994. Visit: [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)
* **Muslim Women’s Network**, support Muslim women and girls suffering from or at risk of abuse. Helpline: 0800 999 5786 / 0303 999 5786. [www.mwnhelpline.co.uk](http://www.mwnhelpline.co.uk)
* **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline**. Tel: 0800 999 5428 (run by Galop)
* **NSPCC**, protect children from domestic abuse, and help others to understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, and how to appropriately respond. Visit: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
* **PEGS**, support parents to deal with the issues associated with child-to-parent abuse. Visit: [pegssupport.co.uk](http://pegssupport.co.uk/)
* **Respond**, support people with learning disabilities, their relatives and professionals affected by trauma and abuse. Visit: [www.respond.org.uk](http://www.respond.org.uk)
* **The Refuge Tech Abuse Team**, support women who have had technology used against them as a weapon of domestic abuse to use technology positively and safely and take back control of their lives again. [www.refugetechsafety.org/](http://www.refugetechsafety.org/)
* **Revenge Porn Helpline**, support all adult victims of intimate image abuse living in the UK. Helpline: 0345 6000 459 Visit: [www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk](http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk)
* **Samaritans** (24/7 service). Tel: 116 123.
* **Sign Health Domestic Abuse Service**, a specialist domestic abuse service to support the health and wellbeing of deaf people. Visit: [www.signhealth.org.uk](http://www.signhealth.org.uk)
* **Southall Black Sisters**, provide advice and information on domestic abuse, racial harassment, welfare, and immigration, primarily for Asian, African, and African-Caribbean women. [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)
* **Stay Safe East**, a specialist organisation providing support for deaf and disabled victims of domestic abuse across London. Referrals should be made to [enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk).
* **Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA)**, offer specialist advice to anyone experiencing domestic abuse who is in financial difficulty. Freephone Financial Support Line: 0808 1968845. Visit: [www.survivingeconomicabuse.org](http://www.survivingeconomicabuse.org/)
* **The Freephone National Stalking Helpline**, operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, provide practical information, support, and advice on risk, safety planning and legislation to victims of stalking, their friends, family, and professionals working with victims. Tel: 0808 802 0300. Visit: [www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)
* **Victim Support**, a specialist service helping anyone affected by any types of crime, not only those who experience it directly, but also their friends, family and any other people involved. Visit: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk).
* **Women’s Aid**, local in-person, and online support services, including a Live Online Chat facility with fully trained female support workers, Survivors Handbook, and an Online Community Forum. [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk).

This is not an exhaustive list and there are likely to be local charities and support groups in your area that offer help and advice to those experiencing domestic abuse. These can be found via the [BrightSky app](http://www.bright-sky.org.uk).

The workplace may often be an employee’s only safe space. Employers should consider allowing external support services to come in and discuss options with the employee in a confidential setting, particularly if there is a risk that the perpetrator may be monitoring the employee’s movements through their mobile phone or another device.

**Trauma support**

People who have experienced a traumatic event can experience long-term impacts. Survivors of domestic abuse, and those who support them, should understand that healing takes time.

Trauma can be triggered long after an event. Employees could need support when situations arise in the future. Examples of events that may trigger trauma include:

* Court cases
* Anniversary of a traumatic event
* Perpetrator released from prison
* Post-separation abuse

The effects of trauma can vary widely. A survivor may need to process their thoughts at any time. Symptoms of trauma can include:

* Depression, including prolonged sadness
* Anxiety
* Low self-esteem and questioning sense of self
* Suicidal thoughts or attempts. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal contact [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](https://www.samaritans.org/).
* Alcohol and drug abuse
* Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, nightmares, physical sensations such as sweating, nausea or trembling.

Offering reassurance when your employee needs it, demonstrating empathy when communicating with them, and making supportive workplace adjustments will all help to increase the employee’s sense of security and safety.

Examples of workplace adjustments include:

* Allowing the employee to sit where they feel most comfortable.
* Designating a quiet spot where the employee can work away from a noisy working environment.
* Putting measures in place to help the employee manage any panic attacks at work.
* Ask your employee what would be helpful and use their answers to create their workplace plan.

As well as helping them to work comfortably, these measures will also help to keep the employee in work, which may even aid their recovery.

1. **Further support for employers**

**The** **Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA)** is a network of over 1,500 employers from a wide variety of sectors across the UK, working collectively to take action on domestic abuse. Membership is free. Visit: [www.eida.org.uk](https://www.eida.org.uk) to find out more about the support services available for your organisation.

**The Employers Domestic Abuse Covenant (EDAC)** is a pledge by businesses to support people by abuse to enter or re-enter the workplace. Employers are invited to sign the covenant and identify opportunities within their businesses for those seeking sustainable employment. Visit: [www.edacuk.org](http://www.edacuk.org).

**The Working It Out** six-step pledge provides a platform for employers to actively demonstrate their commitment to raising awareness of domestic abuse and providing the right support so their employees and business can thrive. Visit [www.domesticabuseeducation.co.uk/working-it-out](http://www.domesticabuseeducation.co.uk/working-it-out) to find out more and take the pledge.

The case studies at the end of these Guidance Notes provide some useful examples of how businesses have implemented Sharon’s Policy into their workplaces.

1. **Perpetrator support**

Although your organisation does not condone domestic abuse, in some cases it may be appropriate to signpost to specialist services employees who disclose that they themselves are perpetrators of domestic abuse, whilst ensuring the safety of other employees. However, you will also want to make it clear to employees that domestic abuse could give rise to disciplinary action under the organisation’s disciplinary policy, up to and including dismissal for Gross Misconduct. In some business sectors, the employer may need to report domestic abuse behaviour to the industry regulator. For example, if the perpetrator works in the financial services sector, serious violent and sexual offences may need to be disclosed to the Financial Conduct Authority. In these instances, the employer should involve its compliance team.

In appropriate cases, perpetrators may be signposted to specialist support to help understand and change their behaviour. As with all employee-sensitive information, this should be kept confidential within the Company and records should comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR.

The Respect Phoneline offers help for domestic abuse perpetrators who want to change, providing confidential advice and support to help people stop being abusive. Helpline: 0808 802 4040 Visit: [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

If you believe that the perpetrator may be placing their partner or family member(s) in genuine danger, then you should report it to the police. If a perpetrator is harassing another member of staff, you should follow your organisation’s bullying and harassment policy. You may also wish to refer to your organisation’s conduct and disciplinary policies.

1. **Domestic Homicide**

Domestic abuse can result in the death of an employee or a family member at the hands of the perpetrator, including the victim of domestic abuse taking their own life. Employers may find themselves dealing with the widespread, traumatising and long-lasting impact on colleagues who knew the deceased.

Employers will want to consider the support they can provide to employees in these circumstances, including access to EAP or counselling (if this is available), time off and flexibility as people deal with what has happened.

Where a person dies following domestic abuse, there may be a Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR - formerly known as a Domestic Homicide Review). A DARDA is a review into the circumstances of the death of a person aged 16 or over which has resulted from abuse by someone they were related to, were in an intimate personal relationship with or a member of the same household. The purpose is to identify lessons to be learnt. They are not an inquiry into how someone died or who was culpable, which are matters for the coroner and the courts. The employer (or employees who knew the deceased) may be asked to provide information to the DARDA.

Employers will want to consider how to support their employees involved in such reviews. Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) is a Centre of Excellence for Reviews after Fatal Domestic Abuse and for Expert and Specialist Advocacy and Peer Support. Visit: [www.aafda.org.uk](http://www.aafda.org.uk).

**ENDS**

Hogan Lovells International LLP reviewed and provided comments on these Guidance Notes in April 2024. It is for information only. It is not intended to create, and receipt of it does not constitute, a lawyer-client relationship with Hogan Lovells International LLP.

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