

Tackling Domestic Abuse – The Recognise, Respond, and Refer Framework

Any organisation, no matter their size or sector, can take effective action on domestic abuse. By talking openly about domestic abuse and creating a supportive workplace culture where those impacted feel safe to come forward, employers can help protect their employees. While employers are not expected to be experts, the RRR framework can be used in any workplace to support employees impacted by domestic abuse.

Recognise

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. It affects 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in the UK. While it may not always be evident that someone is experiencing domestic abuse, here are some signs to look out for:

- Regular interruptions from a current or former partner (or family member) including calls, texts, emails, and them turning up at the workplace.
- Regular or sudden absenteeism, arriving late/leaving work early without explanation, or obsession with leaving work on time.
- Appearing isolated from family, social networks, and colleagues.
- Sudden and sustained changes in behaviour or performance at work (e.g., becoming quiet, withdrawn, emotional, or angry).
- Unusual changes in appearance (e.g., heavy clothing in the summer, long sleeves and/or heavy make-up to cover up injuries).
- Injuries with inconsistent or no explanation.

It's important to note that many of these signs may not be related to domestic abuse and each situation should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Respond

On average, someone will experience 35-50 instances of domestic abuse before they tell someone. Disclosure is an act of strength, and it is very important that they feel listened to, believed, and supported.

Ask the employee what support they need and agree a course of action that prioritises safety and wellbeing. Try to avoid providing solutions, opinions, or unsolicited advice. They may need adjustments and resources, such as a private space where they can make calls; adjustments to their work pattern, hours, or duties; referrals to counselling; and some time away from work (paid or unpaid) to attend court hearings or other appointments.

Make a note of the conversation as you may be asked to provide evidence in any investigation. Tell the employee in advance that the note will be kept in a safe, confidential place with restricted access.

Refer

Referring people to specialist support is an important part of responding appropriately. You can refer to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline and/or the Men's Advice Line. The employee may want to speak with support services from a private space at work if their home or mobile phone is being monitored by their abuser.

For a list of specialist national services, see the [EIDA support directory](#).

The [Bright Sky app](#) contains useful information about domestic abuse, including a directory of local support services.

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