



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



DOMESTIC ABUSE: A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

#YOUARENOTALONE

This toolkit was co-produced by Public Health England (PHE) and Business in the Community (BITC) and, kindly sponsored by The Insurance Charities in 2018.

This updated version, supported by the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA), includes information on the [2021 Domestic Abuse Act](#), new resources, initiatives and case studies.

It is a guide for employers, attending to the challenges they face when seeking to implement domestic abuse policies and support, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in new ways of working. A recent survey has shown that 18% of employees are wanting to work from home all the time after the pandemic, with a further 39% preferring a balance where they are in the office for some of the week and at home for the remainder. This has led to the use of a relatively new term: hybrid working¹.

This toolkit has been informed by an evidence review produced by PHE and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) [review](#) into workplace support for victims of domestic abuse. The evidence was considered by a steering group made-up of practitioners, professionals and business experts.

It also draws on the experience of employers who have taken steps to support victims of domestic abuse in the workplace and signposts external organisations that offer advice and support to employers and employees. The data and information provided is up to date as of June 2021.









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¹ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/planning-hybrid-working#gref>

INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse refers to abusive behaviours which take place between two people aged over 16 who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships; or have a child together; or are relatives².

2021 Domestic Abuse Act states that abuse can be a single incident, but is often a pattern of behaviours, and it takes many forms:

-  **Online**
-  **Psychological**
-  **Physical**
-  **Sexual**
-  **Emotional**
-  **Verbal**
-  **Economic**
-  **Coercive and controlling behaviour**

Men, women and children can all experience domestic abuse, and perpetrators can be male or female, though women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and the majority of perpetrators are men³. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of social class, race, religion, gender identity, sexuality or disability. Individuals who experience abuse are often affected by it long after they have left their partner⁴.

There are 2.3 million victims⁵ of domestic abuse each year, aged 16 to 74. Two thirds of whom are women, one third men, and two in ten offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related. Two women each week and one man each month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner⁶.

These statistics speak for themselves, and that's before we consider that they may not reveal the full picture as under-reporting is an issue. 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. Never more so than in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which has seen an exponential shift to working from home. For those experiencing abuse, the workplace often offers a safe space and a respite away from their abuser. Colleagues and managers can often be the only other people outside the home that survivors talk to each day and are therefore uniquely placed to help spot signs of abuse.

ACCORDING TO REFUGE, CALLS TO HELPLINES HAVE INCREASED BY 61% SINCE LOCKDOWN BEGAN.

There are implications of increased working from home for both employees and employers, and guidance pertaining to this increased risk for victims of domestic abuse is addressed in this toolkit.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-guide-for-local-areas>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2015/chapter4intimatepersonalviolenceandpartnerabuse>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597435/DomesticAbuseGuidance.pdf

⁵ Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics ([ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk))

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2015/chapter4intimatepersonalviolenceandpartnerabuse>



AT HOME SHOULDN'T MEAN AT RISK



#YOUARENOTALONE

COVID-19 has shone a light on the hidden harm of domestic abuse. The Government's extensive [#YouAreNotAlone](#) communications campaign has raised awareness of domestic abuse and the support available to victims, reaching almost 32 million (UK adults as of March 2021) as well as being translated into 16 languages. The Home Office's ['Ask for ANI'](#) codeword scheme continues to provide a simple and discreet

way for domestic abuse victims to signal that they need immediate help using a codeword in participating pharmacies. Almost half of all pharmacies across the UK are now participating in the scheme, following the launch in January 2021. More information on the Government's response to domestic abuse can be found [Government's response to domestic abuse](#).

DOMESTIC ABUSE: A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

THE AIMS OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit will help your organisation, whether private business, public sector or charity, large or small, to support your employees and contribute to tackling domestic abuse.

It offers guidance on steps to take and measures to implement to respond appropriately when an employee discloses abuse. It sets out steps that are easy to follow and helps you choose the best free resources for you and your team. It also signposts to external organisations that offer advice and support to employers and employees.

Further information on the practical steps you can take as an employer can be found on [page 17](#).

It is intended for business leaders, senior managers, Human Resources (HR),

occupational health (OH), health and safety teams and anyone responsible for employee health and wellbeing programmes in the workplace.

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 of its scope. There are links to organisations that specialise in these forms of abuse in the appendix.

The case studies are the contribution of employers who are taking steps to address domestic abuse. They highlight the personal stories of individuals affected as well as practical examples of the initiatives developed by employers to support them.

The value of employers sharing best practice is not to be underestimated. Although the guidance in this toolkit has been informed by the latest data and evidence available, it should be noted that there is limited published evidence on effective employer interventions to support victims of domestic abuse in the workplace .

The role of business extends to sharing examples of what measures have worked to encourage disclosures and support staff.

Joint Ministerial Foreword:



Victoria Atkins
Minister for Safeguarding



Paul Scully
Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets;
Minister for London

As the Ministers for Safeguarding, Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets, we are all too aware of the social, and economic cost of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a cruel and complex crime that can affect anyone, leaving physical, mental and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. While there has been a gradual fall in the incidence of domestic abuse in recent years, we know that

anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or background. With almost 2.3 million victims every single year, the costs related to domestic abuse in England and Wales are estimated at around £71 billion per annum.

The devastating consequences of domestic abuse are such that they necessitate a comprehensive programme of work across Government and broader society. This is why we are so proud to be working in tandem across the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and with EIDA, PHE and BITC on this Domestic Abuse Toolkit for Employers.

The workplace is the only place of safety and respite for many victims of domestic abuse. Colleagues and managers can often be the only other people outside the home that they talk to each day and are therefore uniquely placed to help spot signs of abuse – which this toolkit helpfully describes.

This resource illustrates how important the role of the employer is. This ranges from increasing the understanding and

awareness of domestic abuse in the workplace through signposting to specialist services and organisations or offering a safe space for employees. It shows the value of having a workplace policy on domestic abuse in sending a clear message that abuse is not tolerated and that the employer wants to help. These are just some of the ways that employers are taking action.

We are not asking employers to become specialists in handling domestic abuse, nor that colleagues should take on the role of healthcare workers or counsellors. What we want to do is break the stigma associated with domestic abuse and help all employers to know what practical steps they can take. Every person in every workplace should feel comfortable raising this issue, and secure that raising the matter will not reflect badly on them or undermine their position within the workplace.

This Toolkit is an excellent resource, based on evidence about what makes an inclusive, safe and healthy workplace.

The coronavirus pandemic has emphasised how important it is for us to

ensure that support and help reach victims of this abhorrent crime, wherever it is sought. Home should be a safe place for everyone, but to those living with an abuser it is clearly not. With access to friends and family often controlled by the perpetrator, it is the workplace that offers the respite and support they need. We have seen throughout this coronavirus pandemic innovation from employers - whether that is printing information on the back of till receipts, adding help buttons to online support services or helping with travel and accommodation.

As we build back better and move into new ways of working, this ability to adapt and innovate will continue to be key to tackling domestic abuse. We want to build on the relationship between the specialist sector, business, retailers and the community beyond the landmark Domestic Abuse Act and the coronavirus pandemic.

We are committed to working with the private sector through their role as employers and business in the long-term to ensure they are confident to support those affected by domestic abuse. Together, we can all play our part in tackling this abhorrent crime.

Foreword:



Louise Aston
Wellbeing Director,
Business in the
Community

For too long domestic abuse was perceived as a private matter that happened behind closed doors. We have come a long way as a society in recognising that we all have a role to play in calling it out, addressing stigmas, addressing cultural hurdles, and providing support for those affected.

Lockdown has renewed a societal sense of us all needing to be mindful of our own mental health and that of colleagues. **Barriers have been broken down** with regard to how health and wellbeing is spoken about, and supported in the workplace. This positive change is to be harnessed to ensure domestic abuse becomes part of the employer response.



Elizabeth Filkin
Chair, Employers'
Initiative on
Domestic Abuse

With more employees working from home since March 2020, and the implications of hybrid ways of working which involve remote working for many, the boundary between an employees' work and homelife has blurred, emphasising the role of employers in raising awareness, spotting the symptoms and tackling domestic abuse. Indeed, the role of business has been recognised and

encouraged by the Government, through a BEIS led consultation and report on **workplace support for victims of domestic abuse**.

There is a compelling business and moral case for employers to act. And if anything has proven the ability for business to adapt, it is the last year.

Employers have demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic how to place staff health and wellbeing at the forefront of their business needs. They acted quickly, collaboratively, and effectively to put new systems in place to maintain productivity and look after their staff.

As the adapted ways of working are unlikely to be short term, with **many large companies**, indicating a change in their approach to owning real estate, The Home Office, BEIS, PHE, Business the Community and the EIDA have collaborated to update the original PHE and BITC toolkit accordingly. We recognise the impact that government, business and the third sector can have by working together to tackle this crime in our society.

We believe this evidence based toolkit provides employers with the information and advice they need to foster a culture of openness, encourage more employees to seek help when they need it, and inspire confidence that they will be treated with understanding and compassion.

The government has shown its determination for positive change with the new Domestic Abuse Act and its new definition of domestic abuse. With this toolkit we are calling on employers to recognise that legislation, whilst welcome, will only go so far. Providing comprehensive support for those experiencing domestic abuse, should be a role for employers.

Within the backdrop of cultural changes post-COVID-19, a rise in domestic abuse reports, and a renewed societal emphasis on tackling violence against women and girls, now is the time to tackle the culture of silence around domestic abuse.

**NOW IS THE TIME FOR
BUSINESS TO ACT
AGAINST ABUSE**



Calls to helplines have increased by 61% since the first national lockdown¹



2 in 10 offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related³

There are **2.3 million victims** of domestic abuse each year²



Domestic abuse costs the economy an estimated £14 million a year³

Only **5%** of organisations have a specific guideline or policy on domestic abuse⁴



86% of companies believe they have a duty of care towards domestic abuse victims⁴



2 women each week are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner²



1 man each month is killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner²



Domestic abuse takes place at all levels of society regardless of gender, social class, race, religion, sexuality or disability⁵

1 [Refuge, 2021](#)
2 [ONS, Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2020](#)
3 [Home Office, The economic and social costs of domestic abuse, 2019](#)
4 [Vodafone Domestic Violence Toolkit, 2020](#)
5 [Domestic Abuse Act, 2021](#)

THE BUSINESS CASE

The cost to the economy is also considerable, with an estimated £14 billion arising from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity because of domestic abuse. Some of the cost is borne by Government, such as health services (£2.3 billion) and the police (£1.3 billion)⁷.

An international [study from KPMG](#) commissioned by Vodafone estimates the direct [cost of domestic abuse](#) to business' bottom line as £316 million a year due to decreased productivity, time off work, lost wages and sick pay⁸. It can have an adverse impact on staff morale, as well as an organisation's image and reputation.

[A Trades Union Congress \(TUC\) survey](#) showed that between 36% and 75% of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work⁹. For others, the workplace can be a safe haven and provide a route away from harm. Having a job can provide economic independence that helps people plan a route out to rebuild their lives.

It should also be noted that perpetrators could use workplace resources to threaten, harass or abuse current or former partners.

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

The connection between the workplace and domestic abuse is often inextricable.

Despite this, [research commissioned by the Vodafone Foundation](#) and carried out by Opinium in 2019, revealed a disconnect between what is happening to employees and how employers respond:

86% of companies believe they have a duty of care towards domestic abuse victims.

But only 5% have introduced a specific policy or guideline on the issue.

Having a workplace policy and guidance on domestic abuse sends a clear message that it is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace, that the employer is able to support any staff member who needs help.

Implementing an effective workplace policy and guidance can also contribute to retaining skilled and experienced staff, as well as enhancing your reputation as a responsible employer.

Make sure all managers know about Respond to Abuse, Hestia's free Employer's Advice Line and digital tool – call 0203 8793695 or visit [hestia.org](#)

UP TO 75%
OF THOSE EXPERIENCING
DOMESTIC ABUSE ARE
TARGETED AT WORK



⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918897/horr107.pdf

⁸ <https://newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/press-release/new-research-shows-how-domestic-violence-and-abuse-affects-uk-workplace/>

⁹ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/domestic-violence-and-workplace>

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIP

Taking a proactive and supportive approach can help prevent domestic abuse.

An organisation’s response to domestic abuse begins with raising awareness of what it is, educating staff on what it can look like, and addressing common assumptions, such as that it only happens to women.

By instigating conversations and creating a transparent open environment in which to discuss it, employees affected by domestic abuse will hopefully feel supported enough to acknowledge to themselves or their employer that their relationships are abusive or coercive. Employers can then ensure the right access and signposting to appropriate support.

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

If feasible, appoint a senior HR person who can lead an organisation’s response to domestic abuse and will be trusted by employees to deal with their concerns sensitively and in confidence. HR is well placed to provide leadership and support for staff in the context of organisational policies and guidelines.

My experience suggests that employers have as much of a role to play in raising awareness of, acknowledging, and responding to domestic abuse, just as they have on mental health. At Lloyds Banking Group we are helping our colleagues to better understand the issue, to help remove the stigma and take the issue out of the shadows, so we can all recognise the signs and feel confident and equipped to support each other and our customers.

**Fiona Cannon,
Group Sustainable
Business Director,
Lloyds Banking Group**

THE FOUR R'S APPROACH

This framework is commonly used by employers to secure a clear response to domestic abuse¹⁰.

Recognise

Use this toolkit to recognise the problem, and to enable managers and employees to understand that domestic abuse is a workplace issue that everyone can play a part in tackling.

Respond

Implement policies and processes that enable a supportive workplace which will respond appropriately to disclosure.

Refer

Provide access to internal confidential support and signpost appropriately to external organisations who can help employees that disclose abuse.

Record

If an employee discloses abuse, it's important to record the details of what is said as accurately as possible. Should the abuse become subject to criminal proceedings, this is an exhibit and should be given to the police.



HESTIA BRIGHT SKY

Hestia's [Bright Sky](#) is a free to download mobile app and [website](#) for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.

- UK-wide directory of specialist domestic abuse support services
- Available in 5 languages: English, Urdu, Punjabi, Polish and Welsh
- Content to help you understand if you or someone else is at risk
- Information to help you [stay safe online](#)



For a full list of support organisations and links, [see here](#).

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

It is not always easy to detect when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse. However, as the Government acknowledged in their recent Workplace support for victims of domestic abuse [report](#), employers are not being asked to become specialists in handling domestic abuse, nor should staff take on the role of healthcare workers or counsellors. There is a role for everyone in addressing the stigma, knowing what to look for and encouraging conversations when it is suspected that something is amiss.

This has become both more challenging and more important in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and its blurring of the boundary between home and work.

Abuse is often associated with physical violence, but it takes many forms - an appreciation of this is important to enable employers to spot it.

There is increased public awareness of psychological, emotional, and coercive forms of domestic abuse, and employers can play a role in educating their workforce about domestic abuse.

Carrying out the majority of work meetings through video conference can mask any physical symptoms of abuse, as well as reduce the potential for employers and work colleagues to notice changes in behaviour, such as nervousness or a new reticence to engage in conversation.

The challenge that pre-existed the new hybrid model of working, is that indications that something might be wrong can be symptomatic of other issues such as ill-health. An aware and proactive employer should be looking out for these signs more generally without assuming it will be related to domestic abuse. The more supportive atmosphere an employer can create, whether in the office, for staff operating on the road, or through online team activity, the more likely employees are going to feel comfortable disclosing abuse.

Employers should also be aware that people can be subject to domestic abuse whilst at work. Considering this possibility is an important part of a thorough employers' response.



CHANGES TO LOOK FOR INCLUDE:**WORK
PRODUCTIVITY**

- Change in the person's working patterns: for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work or meetings early
- Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- Change in the use of the phones or email: for example, a large number of personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls, texts and emails. During working from home this could present as being difficult to get hold of or regularly having a partner in the room during meetings
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason, or being anxious to get back to the office after lockdown
- 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
- Secretive about their home life or give reasons not to turn the camera on when meeting online
- 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/colleagues

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE LAW

When a business commits to playing their part in tackling domestic abuse, understanding the legal context for any action taken is important. As an employer there are two strands of consideration, first, the legal obligations to staff, and second, support the employee may need should their case become subject to criminal investigation.

Here we focus on the former as considerations that will always apply. We have provided a link in the resources page for information on how to support an employee involved in a legal process.

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 and associated guidance on domestic abuse helps to ensure that employers are complying with these laws. This extends to people working from home.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Employers have a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment, and they **have a duty of care to employees**¹¹. Helping to support and protect employees who are experiencing domestic abuse is part of that responsibility, although, the law does not require business to provide benefits such as paid time off, or special leave. These are discretionary, although good practice.

Providing paid special leave is likely to help a survivor, and the 2020 report from the [2020 CIPD and Equality and Human Rights Commission report](#) advocates for this.

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021:

The landmark [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) aims to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children and to pursue the abuser. The Act includes a wide range of measures to better protect and support the victims of domestic abuse including their children, and bring perpetrators to justice.

1. Introduces a statutory definition of domestic abuse. This definition will also recognise that children can be impacted by domestic abuse through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effect of it
2. Establishes in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner
3. Creates a domestic abuse protection notice (DAPN) and domestic abuse protection order (DAPO)
4. Prevents cross-examination in person in family and civil proceedings in England and Wales
5. Creates a legislative assumption that adult domestic abuse victims are to be treated as eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts on the grounds of vulnerability (if the victim wants such assistance)
6. Introduces mandatory polygraph examinations of high-risk domestic abuse offenders on licence
7. Places the guidance underpinning the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS, also known as “Clare’s Law”) on a statutory footing
8. Protects security of tenure for domestic abuse victims
9. Introduces a statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation
10. Amends the Housing Act 1996 to give those who are homeless as a result of fleeing domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority
11. Clarifies in law that a victim is unable to consent to actual bodily harm or more serious harm and, by extension, cannot consent to their death either

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT BOLSTERS THE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE ON EVERY LEVEL, BY PROTECTING VICTIMS AND BRINGING PERPETRATORS TO JUSTICE

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND WORKING FROM HOME

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives, and for many, the boundaries between work and home are less clear. But home is not a safe place for everyone and for some people, lockdown has meant being isolated with their abuser. For those experiencing domestic abuse working from home is more than a shift to video conferencing, it can mean removal of work as a safe space and escape from their abuser.

The increase in hybrid working means the role of the employer in tackling abuse has never been so crucial. Employers need to respond accordingly by considering how they keep in touch with their staff and meet their duty of care remotely.

The widespread move to hybrid working is a long term shift that means the role of the employer in tackling abuse has never been so apparent. Employers need to respond accordingly by considering how they keep in touch with their staff and meet their duty of care remotely.

Three actions employers can take

Daily contact

Ensure that no employee goes a full working day without being part of at least one call with a colleague. If contact is lost, be prepared to visit in person.

Signposting

Make links to support services available on the company intranet and alert the whole workforce to them. Encourage staff to download the [Bright Sky](#) app on their work mobiles and ask staff to take ten minutes to read about responding to a disclosure such as [this short blog from UK Says No More](#).

Empower line managers

Issue either written or verbal guidance to line managers to alert them to the specific challenges of working from home for those experiencing abuse. Task them with demonstrating what steps they are taking to look after their teams.

MYTH BUSTING

There are many myths surrounding domestic abuse. Understanding the real facts and addressing misconceptions not only makes it easier for employers to develop truly effective support for their employees, but it could save lives. Employers can learn about some of these myths from, [Refuge](#) and [Women's Aid](#)



TAKING ACTION

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICIES

The TUC states that an effective employer response is founded on being able to spot the signs of domestic abuse, establishing a culture where people can discuss this issue and knowing how to signpost to specialist services¹³. Establishing a workplace policy and offering specific guidance on domestic abuse are critical to:

- Raise awareness
- Identify responsibilities
- Establish due process to ensure adequate support is provided in the event of a disclosure
- Create a culture where employees feel able to disclose domestic abuse

Every organisation is different, and your approach should reflect the size and structure of your business, as well as any post COVID-19 changes such as reducing your office estate. Taking simple steps can be incredibly effective in supporting employees.

[The Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#) provides a legally endorsed template policy for organisations to amend as required. The organisation is free to join.

Here we outline three levels of action that a business may take, depending on resource and the size of your workforce.

“Being open to new ways of doing things, and actively responding to client and customer needs, is crucial to ensure the response fits the challenge you're presented with.”

Hampton Trust



THREE LEVELS OF ACTION**Tier 1: Make a commitment**

- Define domestic abuse for your organisation and staff
- Inform all employees that the organisation will not tolerate domestic abuse in any form, fully supports colleagues who experience domestic abuse, and will take action against those who use abusive behaviours
- 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
- Lead from the top: involve senior leadership and encourage them to take time to read an employer's handbook such [as the EIDA's](#). Employees need to know they have the support and authority to confront domestic abuse
- Foster a safe and supportive workplace culture where employees can talk openly about difficult issues without fear of stigma or harassment

- Signpost to local and national support services clearly around your building, on your intranet and in staff handbooks, such as [Refuge's 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) and [Everyone's Business advice line](#). Emphasise your commitment to confidentiality and put process in place to ensure it is maintained in the event of a disclosure
- Signpost the [Ask for ANI and Safe Spaces scheme](#), run by Hestia, (run by Hestia), which comprises pharmacies and some other public places that will provide a safe room to use for those fleeing abuse. There is also an [online version of Safe Spaces](#) which can be added to a website or intranet. It provides a discreet pathway to specialist domestic abuse support without appearing in a browser history. Or the [Brightsky app](#) can be added to mobile phones and links further advice and support for domestic abuse
- Make specific provision for those working from home by ensuring daily contact with at least one colleague

Tier 2: Training and support

- Provide training to ensure that the organisation has staff who know what steps to take to support colleagues. Local domestic abuse experts are key partners to assist in providing this training. There are several organisations that provide workplace training, referenced at the end of this document. Ensure this training is available to those working at the office and at home
- Agree steps the business can take in the event of a disclosure or if abuse is suspected. For example, diverting phone calls, alerting reception staff, redirecting salaries
- 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 a survivor of abuse to seek medical or legal support

Tier 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, both in person and remotely, 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, for example be prepared for events such as further lockdowns
- 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

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICAL SUPPORT

- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abusive or ex-partner telephones or visits the workplace
- Allow an individual to change work patterns, location or workload as and when they need it, whether to avoid their ex-partner monitoring their timetable or to allow time to facilitate any practical arrangements or medical appointments. Be prepared to open offices if someone cannot safely work from home
- If the abuser has an employees' work email and telephone details, consider diverting their phone calls and emails
- Notify reception and security staff if the abuser is known to come to the workplace
- Check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
- Be led by your employee if they need to redirect their salary or amend their personal information, such as addresses or healthcare details
- Ask individuals to supply you with an up to date emergency contact number for a trusted friend or family member
- Where practical, consider offering a temporary or permanent change of workplace
- Where practical, offer changes in specific duties, for example not expecting the employee to answer telephones or sit on reception
- If in an office, ensure that the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area. If the employee routinely works from home, ensure they have daily contact with a colleague
- Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the employee

#YOUARENOTALONE



OPENING A CONVERSATION WHEN ABUSE IS SUSPECTED

The aim of starting a conversation is to be supportive to employees rather than to encourage disclosure. Many people dealing with domestic abuse will never feel comfortable sharing their experience with 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, whether in person or remotely if the employee regularly works from home, to discuss their wellbeing and identify and implement appropriate support.

Begin by asking indirect questions, to establish an empathetic relationship with the employee. For example:

- 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

- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready
- Is there any extra support you need at the moment? We can look at your workload/working hours

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 and its associated guidance that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.

CULTIVATING AN INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

Fostering an inclusive response to domestic abuse is vital for employees to have confidence that they can come forward, and for the right support to be available when they do. Consider:

- People with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled people¹⁴
- Ethnic minority women are often made responsible for their family's honour. When abuse is disclosed, it often means leaving more than just their perpetrator¹⁵
- LGBT+ people might not be open about their sexuality

at work, meaning to disclose abuse involving also coming out¹⁶

- Transgender women and men have fewer tailored services available to them¹⁷
- Men find it more difficult to disclose abuse and often find more barriers to accessing support, however, men are slightly more likely than women to talk to a colleague about what is happening to them¹⁸
- People who regularly work from home can more easily feel isolated
- Make no assumptions about elderly employees - abuse does not discriminate

¹⁴ <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Disabled%20Survivors%20Too%20CORRECTED.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.nour-dv.org.uk/>

¹⁶ <http://www.galop.org.uk/factsheets/>

¹⁷ <http://www.galop.org.uk/trans-advocacy/>

¹⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6585830/>

DISCLOSURE

If an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it can be challenging for the manager, HR, OH, Employment Assistance Programmes and colleagues too. In the new era of hybrid working, having such a conversation remotely can add to the challenge. The following guidance may help:

- Suggest that you go somewhere quiet and comfortable to speak in private. If the employee works from home, suggest meeting for a walk or at a [Safe Space](#)
- 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

- If conversing in person, have an open posture. Be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space. If speaking remotely, vocalise that you will be led by them on the pace and extent of the conversation
- Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful
- Do not be judgmental. Avoid language that indicates blame or fault such as questions like “Why don’t you leave?” or “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”
- Allow plenty of time and space for them to speak
- Contact the domestic abuse lead in HR making it known to the individual that you are going to do so, and agreeing what can and cannot be shared, to respect confidentiality

- Consider what steps might be necessary to ensure they remain safe whether in the workplace or working remotely, 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.



RESPONDING TO PERPETRATORS

Employers have a duty of care to support employees dealing with domestic abuse. This sometimes involves an employee perpetrating the abuse.

Employers can become aware of it through self disclosure, sometimes prompted by a violent incident, an allegation, or notice through the police.

Managers should also be aware of signs that an employee is using abusive behaviours. This has been made more challenging since moving to working from home and a new hybrid working model becoming the new norm. However, there remain some signs that employers can look out for:

- Negative comments made by the abuser about a partner
- Expressing anger and blaming their partner for issues
- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner, or if working remotely, referencing their partner's behaviour
- Repeated injuries such as scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles

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

If a manager believes there is immediate threat to life, the police should be contacted.

Engaging with perpetrators in a constructive way doesn't mean excusing the abuse, but it is necessary 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 be prepared to encourage employees to address violent and abusive behaviours of all kinds, including by connecting them with relevant frontline support services.

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 intervention or specialist help is required, for both the perpetrator and other employees.

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

TecSOS

TecSOS (Technical SOS) is a mobile handset issued by the police to people experiencing domestic abuse. It provides immediate prioritised 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.

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

There are three primary considerations to make in the event of a perpetrator disclosing abuse:

- **Reduce the risk for family members**
The safety and wellbeing of the person experiencing abuse is an urgent priority. Consider what support can be provided to them in the workplace, or externally. Connect with specialist agencies
- **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 victim and other employees. These may include reassigning duties and restricting the perpetrators' access to information about the person they are targeting. Some actions may require coordination between managers which should be done in consultation with the person being abused

Sometimes the person experiencing abuse and the perpetrator may choose to seek solutions jointly: their decision should be respected and supported but managers should not facilitate these discussions.

In discussions 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: 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

- Don't mandate a perpetrator of abuse to attend a perpetrator programme as part of their disciplinary at work. All programmes require the perpetrator to want to change
- A manager or HR lead's job is not to act as a specialist, but to work alongside specialist services to help manage the risk for all parties

In some industries, the behaviour of a perpetrator might need to be reported to a regulator. For example, special rules apply in financial services and serious violent and sexual offences should be disclosed to the Financial Conduct Authority. In other cases, where the individual is a regulated professional, for example a health or social care worker, their behaviour is a potential risk to patients and/or a breach of their code of conduct. There might also be a higher obligation to disclose information to the employer or the regulator if the employee is charged or convicted for an offence.

Employers also need to be aware of strict data protection requirements when processing sensitive personal data. The legal provisions are complex and employers can contact the [DBS](#) or take specialist advice elsewhere.

Any employee using abusive behaviour should be warned they risk suspension or dismissal if their conduct does not change. If abuse does not stop, formal disciplinary procedures should take place. Depending on the situation, an employer may move immediately to disciplinary action against the employee, without prior warning, in line with internal conduct policies and employment law.



**AT HOME
SHOULDN'T
MEAN**

AT RISK



USEFUL RESOURCES

RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge (0808 2000 247): <http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

[Bright Sky app](#)

[Mankind Initiative: advice on support for men experiencing domestic abuse](#)

Specialist LGBT+ advice line
<http://www.galop.org.uk/>

Nour provide Islamic support and advice to victims of domestic abuse
<https://www.nour-dv.org.uk/>

<https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/>

Resources for employers

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>

Department of Health and SafeLives:
[Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse](#)

CIPD and EHRC, Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse: a guide for employers,
<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/supporting-employees-experiencing-domestic-abuse>

Equality and Human Rights Commission - Domestic abuse: workplace policies and managing and supporting employees
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/domestic-abuse-workplace-policies-and-managing-and-supporting-employees>

The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse [handbook](#).

Unison - Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue. Includes 'Model workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse':
<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24192.pdf>

TUC Guide for reps:
<https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5e875ae4d0715-5e8c6417dfc28>

UK NO MORE Global Directory · [NOMORE Global Directory](#)

Unilever domestic abuse policy example
<https://www.unilever.com/news/news-and-features/Feature-article/2021/its-time-to-end-the-silence-on-domestic-violence.html>

Pharmacy scheme to help domestic abuse victims [Pharmacies launch codeword scheme to offer 'lifeline' to domestic abuse victims](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Hestia's [Respond to Abuse App](#) which supports employers to help staff experiencing domestic abuse to plan a route to safety. It also provides guidance on situations involving employees who might be perpetrators of domestic abuse

Training providers

Mankind Initiative:
<https://www.mankind.org.uk/for-professionals/training/>

SafeLives:
<https://safelives.org.uk/training>

[Respond to Abuse](#) is Hestia's free Employer's Advice Line and digital tool which supports employers to help staff experiencing domestic abuse to plan a route to safety

CASE STUDIES

Large Businesses

LLOYDS BANKING GROUP, FIONA CANNON OBE, GROUP SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS DIRECTOR

At Lloyds Banking Group domestic and economic abuse is a key business issue; at any one time several of our 30 million customers and 65,000 colleagues are likely to be experiencing domestic abuse.

**LLOYDS
BANKING
GROUP**



Motivation

We believe employers have a very real role to play in raising awareness, acknowledging, and responding to abuse.

Our approach to domestic abuse sits at the heart of our Wellbeing strategy, comprising healthy bodies, healthy minds, healthy finances, and healthy relationships. We developed our approach using the ‘acknowledge, respond and refer’ framework to support our aim of raising awareness, and empowering colleagues to support each other and our customers.

Action

We recognise we are not experts on this issue so work in partnership with charities including Surviving Economic Abuse, Safe Lives and Tender, as well as our charitable Foundations and the Employer’s Initiative against Domestic Abuse, to create a wide range of practical support for domestic abuse victims.

To share a few:

- For customers we established the Domestic and Economic Abuse Specialist Support Team providing specialist financial support for victims and helping them regain control of their finances
- For colleagues we launched an Emergency Assistance Programme, covering the cost of emergency hotel accommodation and one-to-one support for a colleague and their children
- We seconded a specialist from Surviving Economic Abuse to help us continue to evolve how we support colleagues and customers
- On the back of our ATM receipts, we signpost Refuge’s National Domestic Abuse hotline and Respect’s Advice Line for men to help raise awareness
- Internally we run regular communications campaigns and webinars to raise awareness, signpost support and provide room for colleagues to share their personal experiences
- We understand the importance of education so worked with Tender and

Surviving Economic Abuse to provide training for all colleagues on how to spot the signs and support a colleague

- We support Line Managers to understand their role and the workplace support options available to colleagues. For example, we adopt a flexible approach to emergency leave meaning Line Managers are empowered to provide colleagues with the paid emergency leave they need

The takeaway for other employers

We harness our learnings and challenges to play an active role within our sector. We recognise that as a big brand employer we have a voice that can make a difference beyond our workforce.

To that end we have been engaging with the industry to ensure the Domestic Abuse Act and UK Finance Code of Practice raises awareness of the financial complexities that victims face.

We were pleased to be named a ‘best practice employer’ in the government’s recent report on the role employers must play in supporting those experiencing domestic abuse.

HAMPTON TRUST

Hampton Trust has 25 years of experience of working within the field of Domestic Abuse. We specialise in engaging with Perpetrators to support behaviour change and keep victims and children safe from the impacts of Domestic Abuse. We deliver a range of programmes aimed at encouraging healthy, non abusive relationships.

**Motivation**

Hampton Trust needed to be innovative in our response to the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure our service continued. We recognised that the impact of lockdown increased the opportunity for Domestic Abuse to escalate and our response needed to reflect this risk.

Action

We rapidly developed a virtual 'Covid Intervention Model' ensuring our work could continue. We experienced higher than usual engagement, and our referrals increased.

Staffing was increased and models of delivery were restructured to ensure the safety of victims and children remained paramount. Regular calls and support were in place for both perpetrators and victims within our service.

We drew on our knowledge and expertise to devise a model of working where risk and safety were at the forefront. Group Work was suspended and initially support was offered via telephone calls. The team trialled virtual platforms where video calls could be utilised with service users who

already knew each other, ensuring they had safe, confidential spaces to talk and engage freely.

We increased our team of Domestic Abuse Safety Advisors to ensure that we maintained regular contact with every partner/ex-partner of the perpetrators we were working with.

As restrictions eased, we focused on our return to face-to-face group work. With an increase of referrals during this time we had a larger than usual caseload so in response a new model was devised to give perpetrators quick and easy access to a new, shorter module focusing on strategies and tools for self-management, alongside powerful sessions on the impact of domestic abuse on children. Upon completion of this 6-week intervention, they could then move into the longer 16-week intervention.

As a result of moving to a new virtual delivery model we have evidenced an increase in retention rates as the ease of attending a virtual group has made the service far more accessible to most people. Wait times have reduced allowing more people to engage with us earlier on in their journey to identify change. The

staff also reported greater disclosures, self-reflection and peer support has been evidenced.

While we are keen to return some of our groups to face-to-face, the way our online sessions were received means we will continue to deliver some interventions online. We believe this offers a trauma informed route into the service, building confidence and safety before attending a face-to-face group. The additional benefits to the services users is a reduction in travel time and expenses.

The takeaway for other employers

Our new model of working, whilst initially in response to the pandemic and aiming to keep our service going, actually encouraged more people to engage positively with our service, whether that be through an agency or to self-refer. Access to our support at an earlier stage in a relationship minimises the impact of Domestic Abuse on victims and children.

Being open to new ways of doing things, and actively responding to client and customer needs, is crucial to ensure the response fits the challenge you're presented with.

UNILEVER

In November 2020 Unilever launched its Global Domestic Violence Policy, internally through a campaign called Unmute for Domestic Violence. It was made available externally to help businesses that don't yet have their own policy - [It's time to end the silence on domestic violence](#).

**Motivation**

Unilever wish to create a safe and inclusive workplace where employees can seek help without stigma and where staff have access to basic training to know how to respond appropriately if they feel a colleague is potentially at risk.

Action

Our Global Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy puts several practical support measures in place, including; staff are provided with access to 'safe leave'; flexible working conditions; counselling and support services should they be needed. The Unilever policy applies to all employees globally and also provides extra holidays, time off to access support, relocation to another site if necessary, and financial support, for example setting up new bank details and legal support.

In addition, we established our domestic abuse learning pathway, meaning all staff have access to online training at their convenience. The programme has now been translated in over nine languages.

As we arrived at 2021, we announced our global theme for the year - #ChooseToChallenge. Unilever is dedicating time and resources to playing our part in ending the silence on domestic abuse. A toolkit has been provided containing:

- Guidance for leaders for onboarding others, helping signpost sensitivities
- Editable posters for use in staff activity, virtual notice boards and newsletters
- Campaign logos
- Unmute video with translations for local markets

The call to action for employees was to:

- Read and understand the global policy
- Take the training modules
- Speak to their manager, local Diversity champion, or HR team to learn and take action

The takeaway for other employers

Our goal is to ensure that all our 120,000 employees feel empowered and capable to have open conversations if they are subject to abuse, or suspect their colleague is.

Our work to tackle domestic abuse is a long-term commitment. If we could encourage other employers to take three actions, they would be:

- To speak up and be an ally
- Download and read our global domestic violence policy
- Take steps to develop your own company policy

ANGLIAN WATER

Domestic abuse is a hugely destructive problem and we all have a collective responsibility to tackle it. Being a business that covers from The Humber to Essex we knew that domestic abuse was likely to affect those that we work with as well as many of our seven million customers.

**Motivation**

We want to provide the opportunity for colleagues to openly discuss this topic giving them access to the necessary support and help through our policies, processes and resources. However, the pandemic presented a new challenge in that while we were able to quickly move the majority of our employees to work from home to keep them safe from Coronavirus, spending more time at home wasn't necessarily the safest option for everyone.

Action

The UK government was very clear that household isolation guidance does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse. Where possible, we asked our staff to follow the 'stay at home' message, but where we had people who needed to come into the office for either a physical or mental health need we made it clear that employees could request access to our buildings. People using this system were not encouraged to disclose their reason.

This process was shared with our leaders and managers through a toolkit prior to implementation to explain in more detail examples of the scenarios that would form part of this process, such as domestic abuse.

We pride ourselves on being a leading employer with a robust and holistic approach to wellbeing – we believe our people should come to work and feel happy, health and safe. The development of our workplace policy on domestic abuse not only sends a clear message that it is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace but that we want to help. The policy is designed to provide a source of information, support, and a navigational tool to direct employees to the internal and external support resources available to them. It is compatible with both the company's zero tolerance stance on abuse, and the law, making it clear that perpetrators of domestic abuse will be dealt with appropriately.

We believe the introduction of this policy will improve staff wellbeing and ultimately help to retain skilled and experienced staff.

It's not just about our people though, our Anglian Water community includes over seven million customers, and we have a duty of care to them too. That's why we've adopted Online Safe Spaces on our customer website to provide a discreet pathway to specialist domestic abuse support for those that need it.

The takeaway for other employers

Our aim is to continue to play our part in breaking the stigma surrounding domestic abuse, and to further raise awareness and understanding within our workforce so that Anglian Water is a safe space for everyone to work.

SME

SHARON LIVERMORE, SURVIVOR AND FOUNDER OF KAMEO RECRUITMENT, AMBASSADOR OF EIDA

I am a survivor of domestic abuse and choose to use my story to empower others and alter the perception businesses have of domestic abuse.



Motivation

In 2012 I was physical and emotionally abused. In 2018 I had survived the abuse and made a promise to myself to be a voice for the people who no longer had theirs; Kameo Recruitment was born. I established my business as a platform to raise awareness of domestic abuse, our core focus being SME's. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, the size of business you work in should not dictate the level of support you have access to. It was harrowing to learn that many small businesses had not considered that their employees could be going through it or had previously been victims, and where they did recognise domestic abuse, they had very little in place to support their staff.

Action

After gaining support from a local charity, quickly followed by the Domestic Abuse Alliance and the Employers initiative on Domestic Abuse, we began using the knowledge we had to educate SME's on how they could do more to protect their employees. Our simple, yet effective presentation defined domestic abuse, highlighted the signs, discussed the myths, offered sensitive conversation starters and

a list of useful contacts for employers to use should the need arise. We wanted to ensure all SMEs understood that they have a duty of care to make domestic abuse their business, and that by doing so they are potentially saving lives.

Our seminars and virtual presentations to large groups and individual companies gave people the strength to come forward and announce themselves as victims of domestic abuse, many were on the other side, but some were still living in it and the majority confessed that their employer either did not know or had not supported them appropriately.

It became apparent through this project that smaller businesses would benefit from a template domestic abuse policy, a legal document they could access free of charge and implement in their business. Thanks to EIDA and others my policy became a reality.

I am an EIDA Ambassador and I am proud to be part of a dynamic community of large and small businesses, who come together to share learning and resources with the aim of better supporting those affected by domestic abuse. Because of Kameo Recruitment, many small businesses are

now aware of the crucial difference they can make, and a number have either written their own policy or started to have the conversation within their businesses. Our presentation helped SMEs understand the magnitude of the problem and the likelihood of encountering a victim within their workplace.

To date we have delivered our presentation to over 30 businesses, with a potential employee reach of over 25,000 people. We will not stop campaigning, until every business everywhere has a domestic abuse policy in place and understands the importance of not only having the policy but using it and ensuring all their employees are kept from harm.

The takeaway for other employers

My message to small and medium sized enterprises is that we encourage you to take-action immediately and utilise the resources available to you. Have the conversation and help end the notion that domestic abuse is not everyone's business. It is our business, and the more of us who recognise this, the greater chance we have of helping the 2.3 million adults experiencing domestic abuse every year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The intellectual property of this toolkit belongs jointly to Business in the Community and Public Health England.

Both organisations are grateful to the partners that have made this vital update possible.

With thanks to:

[The Insurance Charities](#) for funding the update.

[The Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#) for their support and input.

The original advisory group:

- Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence
- West Midlands Police
- Tavistock Relationships
- EIDA
- Refuge
- TecSOS
- Mankind Initiative
- Women's Aid
- Safe Lives
- Stonewall Housing

Case studies contributors:

- Lloyds Banking Group
- Hampton Trust
- Unilever
- Anglian Water
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Business in the Community is a registered charity in England and Wales (297716) and Scotland (SC046226). Company limited by guarantee No. 1619253.