



Tackling domestic abuse - policy guidance

Introduction

This guidance is for workplace representatives. However, it may also be used as a reference point for school/college leaders and by employers. Any policy should be agreed via proper consultation with all recognised trade unions and other stakeholders and amended to suit individual workplaces.

The employer has a responsibility to provide all staff and users with a safe working environment.¹ It is acknowledged that for some staff, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers solace from home life.

It should be noted that whilst the majority of domestic abuse survivors are women, it can and does affect the whole workforce.² Research suggests that disabled, LBGTI, BAME and GRT (Gypsy, Roma Traveller) teachers have an increased risk of experiencing domestic and or family abuse. Men also account for one in every three reported incidences of domestic abuse.

While it is acknowledged that domestic abuse can affect anyone, it is still predominantly women and children who suffer at the hands of male perpetrators. This makes it a gendered form of abuse.

Domestic abuse is a form of violence against women and girls and should be addressed as part of a wider strategy to promote gender equality.

Definition

Domestic abuse can be described as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. In the vast majority of cases, it is perpetrated by men against women. However, domestic violence against men is more commonplace than

¹ Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, Health and Safety, NI Order, 1978.

² This also includes domestic violence and family abuse/violence.

is often realised. The social attitude associated with being 'a man' often means that men suffer in silence and do not seek the help and support they need. The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) highlights the worrying statistic that approximately half of all men who experience domestic abuse did not tell anyone, as opposed to only 20% of women.³

Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by partners, ex-partners and family members and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attacks involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate and are perpetrated against the person's will, including rape), and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, homophobic/biphobic/transphobic abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as 'outing', the threat of 'outing', or enforced isolation from family and friends).⁴

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence);
- psychological and/or emotional abuse;
- physical or sexual abuse;
- financial or economic abuse;
- harassment and stalking; and
- online or digital abuse.

Domestic abuse exists as part of violence against women and girls and also includes different forms of family violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour crimes' that are perpetrated primarily by family members, often with multiple perpetrators.

³ The 12 months up to March 2018, Crime Survey for England and Wales.

⁴ Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Transgender people's experiences of Domestic Abuse. Scottish Transgender Alliance.

Policy intent

Domestic abuse is a workplace issue and can affect performance. Domestic abuse is also a crime.

Employers should commit to providing a safe and secure working environment that supports those experiencing domestic abuse as well as survivors of domestic abuse.

It is important that employees are supported to feel confident about raising issues in the workplace and that they know who they can approach for help and support. The employer will treat all disclosures in the strictest confidence. All disclosures will be dealt with swiftly, sensitively and be non-judgemental.

The employer should commit to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its workers and recognises that women particularly, but not exclusively, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments if they are experiencing domestic abuse.

This policy guidance sets out the expectations and guidelines that employers should follow to provide the right support for survivors of domestic abuse in the workplace. It is intended to be a support guide for all workers.

All school/college stakeholders should be encouraged to work proactively to support women experiencing domestic abuse and to ensure the workplace is a supportive environment.

Legislative compliance

The employer's policy must be fully compliant with the following legislation (as appropriate).

England, Scotland and Wales

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974;
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, GB Regulations 4;
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010 (Eng, Scotland and Wales);
- Equality Act 2010.

Northern Ireland

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, NI Regulation 3(1);
- Health and Safety, NI Order, 1978;
- Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (NI);
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

Policy aims

The employer's policy should aim to:

- educate and inform about the devastating effects of domestic abuse, including how employers can support women at work;
- promote understanding of domestic abuse and related issues;
- raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce;
- provide appropriate support and reasonable adjustments for employees; and
- create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise the issue of domestic abuse and ask for additional support at work.

Understanding the possible signs and symptoms of domestic abuse

The survivor may not want to admit that they are in an abusive relationship and this may be hard to understand from someone looking in, but this is not a decision for you to make. Where an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse, the school/college should offer support and help to the individual as appropriate.

Certain behaviours/patterns of behaviour to look out for include:

- Erratic working hours. Being early or late for work. Is there a pattern? (I.e. are Mondays always being missed?);
- Increased sick leave;
- Increasingly anxious and withdrawn;
- Poor mental health;
- Tiredness;
- Loss of interest in appearance;
- Noticeable weight gain/loss;
- Missing deadlines;
- Unwillingness to discuss about home life/family plans;
- Unexplained injuries/bruises.

This is not an exhaustive list and should be treated with caution, given that such behaviours may also signal other problems affecting physical or mental health.

Workplace support

There are many factors which can make working life more difficult for women experiencing domestic abuse. However, workplaces can take measures to mitigate these factors.

The employer should commit to staff training on this issue.

In order to protect staff from domestic abuse and violence, the employer should consider reasonable adjustments for employees, including:

- early/late start and finish times;
- flexible working (this may be as a temporary or fixed arrangement)
- agreed paid leave;
- time off for counselling/medical appointments;
- a safe space to gather themselves;
- an agreed person the survivor can approach for additional support during times of turmoil.

As part of the employer's health and safety duties, an individual risk assessment should be routinely undertaken in consultation with the employee and should consider:

- site safety;
- classroom/workspace changes (these may be on a temporary basis);
- 'other' staff knowledge (for ongoing support);
- workplace training on the sharing of staff information; and
- anything else the employer or employee feels would ensure their ongoing safety at work.

Appendix 2 will help with the planning of specific adjustments during the meeting. The adjustments should be shared with the employee before the meeting for consideration.

Managers

It is recognised that domestic abuse is a very personal issue that and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. With HR support, line managers should be offered appropriate support to assist employees.

Managers should be guided by the survivor's wishes, but it is advisable that the employer encourages the abuse survivor to discuss any support that is

needed in the workplace with a trade union representative or an appropriate colleague.

There are various support organisations available to survivors (Appendix 3), and employers should consider the provision of appropriate workplace counselling/support services as part of their support package.

'Management advice' is provided as an Appendix 1 to this policy.

Employees

Employees should be assured that any disclosure made will be treated in the strictest confidence and that every effort will be made by the employer to support the employee in the workplace.

Information on an employee's personal circumstances is considered 'personal data' under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Any information provided by the employee must therefore be protected under these regulations.

Links to other policies

- Dignity at Work;
- Grievance;
- Sexual harassment;
- Flexible working; and
- Performance Management.

Remote working OR working in isolation

Employees who are working from home face increased risk of domestic abuse and violence. Domestic abuse is always a workplace issue regardless of where the employee is working. A home can become the new workplace that may be unsafe for women at risk of domestic abuse. Employer policies and risk assessments should include measures to mitigate against the risk of domestic violence for women at risk who are working remotely.

Where an employee is at risk, the employer should consider:

- regular checks on the employee by a designated senior member of staff;
- use of an agreed 'safe' word that the employee and designated member of staff recognises for recognising danger or impending harm;
- a safety plan for individuals when working at home, to avoid dangerous situations and, if necessary, an escape route; and
- emergency contacts with appropriate encryption of such information (e.g. contact telephone numbers disguised on mobile phones).

Perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse

It is acknowledged that perpetrators of domestic abuse may be employees and where a disclosure is made, it will be treated in the strictest confidence.

All disclosures should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

The employer should confirm that they will not condone any form of domestic abuse or violence. They should also affirm their role in supporting any employee to address their behaviour.

The employer should provide access to support organisations, from those mentioned in Appendix 3, to their own support services, if applicable.

Attention is specifically drawn to *Respect* support to help perpetrators. There is a free phone line Monday - Friday: 0808 802 4040.

<https://respectphonenumber.org.uk> (further details in Appendix 3).

Any action by an employee that is found to be aiding a perpetrator of domestic abuse should be addressed via the appropriate workplace policy.

Domestic violence and abuse is a crime and the employer should confirm that, if necessary, contact will be made with the police for any incidents where an employee feels unsafe or at risk from abuse or harassment in the workplace.

Additional help and support

NASUWT

www.nasuwt.org.uk

For a more comprehensive guide to support organisations, see Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Management guidance for informal discussions

Managers should familiarise themselves with information about domestic abuse before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

NASUWT Workplace Representatives should consider providing a copy of the NASUWT Domestic Abuse Toolkit, available to download from the website.

Line managers

It is recognised that domestic abuse is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Line managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments when needed to help women deal with issues arising from domestic abuse.

If a meeting is agreed by both parties to discuss ongoing support for employees experiencing domestic abuse, it is recommended that line managers adhere to the following:

- Arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both parties;
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague;
- Choose a venue that provides privacy and is unlikely to be disturbed;
- Allow adequate time to talk;
- Reassure the employee that the information will be treated in strictest confidence and will not be shared without their consent with other colleagues;

- Encourage the employee to be open and honest. It is difficult to help when you have not got the full picture;
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed;
- Keep a note of all discussions and agree outcomes and next steps (the *Confidential Discussion Record* should be used to facilitate this);
- Agree a follow-up meeting to review the situation.

Confidential Discussion Record

Date:	Present:

STAFF DETAILS		
NAME	Job Title	Department/Location

Summary of discussions:

Agreed action points/reasonable adjustments:

Agreed date of review meeting:

Signed (staff).....

Signed (manager).....

Appendix 2 – Workplace issues/suggested adjustments

There are many factors which can make working life more difficult for women experiencing domestic abuse, and workplaces can take measures to mitigate these factors.

The employer commits to staff training on this issue.

Discussions should include the following:

- Early/late start and finish times;
- Flexible working (this may be as a temporary arrangement) ;
- Agreed paid leave;
- Time off for counselling/medical appointments;
- A safe space to gather themselves;
- An agreed person the survivor can approach for additional support during times of turmoil.

A risk assessment will be routinely offered and will consider:

- site safety;
- classroom/workspace changes (these may be on a temporary basis);
- 'other' staff knowledge (for ongoing support);
- workplace training on the sharing of staff information;
- anything else the employer or employee feels would ensure their ongoing safety at work.

A review date for the risk assessment will be agreed with the employee and adhered to.

Appendix 3

Support organisations – amend as appropriate

Phone 101 for police support but if you feel you or someone you know is in immediate danger, phone 999.

NASUWT members must contact their workplace representative or Regional/National centre if they are concerned about their safety in the workplace or attendance at work.

Women's Aid – National domestic abuse helpline

www.womensaid.org.uk

Women – 0808 2000 247

Men – 0808 801 0327 (run by *Respect*)

Under 25s – 0808 808 4994

Women's Aid also provides a survivor's handbook that has practical advice and information on seeking support.

National Centre of Domestic Violence

Works in close partnership with the police, solicitors and other support agencies to help victims obtain protection. A free, fast [emergency injunction service](#) for survivors of domestic abuse and violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation.

0800 970 2070

TEXT NCDV to 60777

Email: office@ncdv.org.uk

Welsh Women's Aid/Cymorth I Ferched Cymru

www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

0808 801 0800

Women's Aid Scotland

www.womensaid.scot

0131 226 6606

info@womensaid.scot

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Hotline

The helpline is used to support anyone with experience of domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them. A confidential, sensitive service to anyone who calls.

www.sdafmh.org.uk

0800 027 1234 – 24-hour service

helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

Chat online facility

Women's Aid Northern Ireland

www.womensaidni.org

info@womensaidni.org

028 9024 9041

Guernsey

www.gov.gg/domestic-abuse

Jersey

www.gov.je/stayingsafe/homepersonal/domesticabuse

Gibraltar

Royal Gibraltar Police – 200 72500 or Care Agency - 200 78528

Survivors are advised to call 199 if they feel in immediate danger of serious harm.

Sistah Space

www.sistahspace.org

Founded in November 2015, Sistah Space is a community-based non-profit initiative created to bridge the gap in domestic abuse services for African heritage women and girls.

Asian Women's Resource Centre

www.asianwomencentre.org.uk

Provides support services in the following languages: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Hinko, Konkani, Marathi, Pashto, Patwari, Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi, Portuguese, Italian, Kurdish, Turkish & Azerbaijan. Services ensures cultural sensitivity, confidentiality and listening time in a safe, non-judgemental environment. They operate an open door policy to all women in need from all ethnicity and backgrounds.

020 8961 6549 or 020 8961 5701

Email: info@awrc.org.uk

Email: referrals@awrc.org.uk

The Traveller Movement

Support for women members of the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller community.

www.travellermovement.org.uk/advocacy-support/woman-girls

Stonewall

Supporting members of the LGBT community.

www.stonewall.org.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse-resources-lgbt-people

Bi Survivors Network

We provide a space where bisexual survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence can talk and find solidarity.

www.consortium.lgbt/member-directory/bi-survivors-network

Galop – Help for members of the LGBT+ community

0800 999 5428

Email: help@galop.org.uk

Women's Aid – National domestic abuse helpline.

The National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) **Domestic** Violence Helpline provides confidential support to all members of the **LGBT**

communities, their family, friends, and agencies supporting them.

Number of the helpline – 0300 999 5428 or 0800 999 5428

www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/lgbt

Bright Sky Mobile App

Free to download, provides support and information to employers and anyone who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

Safe spaces during lockdown

<https://uksaysnomore.org>

Details of local pharmacies, offering safe spaces, phones and information.

Tools and resources for individuals and organisations to take action and get involved in making a difference.

Respect

Respect Phonenumber is a confidential helpline, email and webchat service for domestic abuse perpetrators and those supporting them.

We support men and women who are using abuse in same-sex or heterosexual relationships.

Call: 0808 8024040 or visit www.respectphonenumber.org.uk