

# Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue

A UNISON guide

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## Why is domestic abuse a trade union issue?

At first sight, domestic abuse seems to be a personal issue, concerned with people's private lives and nothing to do with trade unionism. But it is so widespread that without doubt there are many UNISON members who are affected, and whose lives and work are overshadowed by it. Some may be members of your branch.

More than two women a week are killed by current or ex-partners and figures are sadly rising. Currently one in four women in the UK will experience domestic violence sometime in their lives. All research indicates that in an economic recession domestic violence and abuse increases but meanwhile the cuts are adversely affecting women's support services and refuges.

The vast majority of the victims/survivors of domestic violence are women and children, and women are also considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence, and sexual abuse. It is most commonly perpetrated by men. Consequently, in this document we refer to the perpetrator throughout as 'he' and the victim/survivor as 'she'.

However, the information in this guide relates to all victims/survivors of domestic abuse as UNISON recognises that controlling and abusive behaviour can occur in mixed and same sex relationships, and within extended families, and can affect men as well as women. It can include stalking, forced marriage, so called 'honour crimes' and female genital mutilation.

Domestic abuse can affect job performance, and therefore job prospects and security. It threatens the health and safety of those who suffer. It can threaten their lives. It is one of the most extreme forms of oppression a woman can experience.

The effects of domestic abuse, like those of harassment in the workplace, can be far-reaching. Home and work issues cannot always be neatly separated, especially for a woman.

UNISON is committed to achieving equality in our workplaces, in our union and across society. Equality is a high priority for UNISON in our negotiating and campaigning work. People have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work, to do their job to the best of their ability, free from discrimination and harassment. Just as we support members experiencing race, gender, sexual orientation and other forms of discrimination, UNISON recognises we need to find ways to help our members who experience the discrimination of domestic abuse.

Domestic violence is also a health and safety issue. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (1996), employers have a legal responsibility in promoting the welfare and safety of all staff.

It is important to remember that victims/survivors of domestic violence may be at increased risk of harm in their workplace if they leave an abusive partner, as it may be the only place where they can be located. As such, employers who are aware of domestic violence and fail to protect their employees from violence at work may be held liable under health and safety legislation.

Tragically, people sometimes die as a result of domestic abuse. When this happens, the law (under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Adults Act 2004) says that professionals involved in the case must conduct a multi-agency review of what happened (a domestic homicide review). The aim is to identify what needs to be changed to reduce the risk of it happening again in the future, and the reviews may be published. Employer involvement is actively encouraged and is seen as an important part of the duty of care to their employees.

The impact of domestic abuse is wide-ranging and will inevitably affect workers and their colleagues. It is important that it is not ignored in the workplace but understood as a serious, recognisable and preventable issue.

UNISON recognises that domestic abuse is a trade union concern. The information and advice provided here is intended to help UNISON branches, officers and stewards understand some of the issues and provide the support needed by members experiencing that abuse.

We also hope we have provided some helpful information to victims/survivors of abuse (see the further contacts section).

## **If you are concerned for your own or someone else's immediate safety, ring the police on 999**

**If you or a friend needs help call 0808 2000 247 the freephone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline** (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) or email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk). The helpline is a member of Language Line and can provide access to an interpreter for non-English speaking callers. The helpline can also access the BT Type Talk Service.

### **You can also contact:**

**0808 802 1414 – Northern Ireland Women's Aid 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline (for women and men)**

**0800 027 1234 – Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline**

**0808 80 10 800 – All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline**

**Broken Rainbow UK** runs a national LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) domestic violence helpline providing confidential support to all members of the LGBT communities, their family & friends.

**Call 0300 999 5428, Mondays and Thursdays 10am to 8pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10am to 5pm. There is also a trans specific service Tuesdays 1pm to 5pm. Outside these hours, you can email [help@brokenrainbow.org.uk](mailto:help@brokenrainbow.org.uk) or there is online chat on the website [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk).**

**Men's Advice Line** for men experiencing domestic violence.

**Call 0808 801 0327 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm or email: [info@mensadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadvice.org.uk)**

## What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is generally used to refer to abusive or violent behaviour between partners or ex-partners. Children may be involved, too, either suffering or witnessing the abuse, as may other family members, either as victims/survivors or abusers themselves.

The abuse may be emotional, verbal, psychological, sexual or physical, or a combination. It affects women of all classes, ages, races and religions as well as lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

For purposes of data collection on incidence of domestic violence, the government has agreed a core definition:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: 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 their victim.’

All forms of domestic abuse – psychological, economic, emotional and physical – come from the abuser’s desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners.

Different terms may be used – ‘violence’; ‘abuse’; ‘battering’; ‘violence by known men’; ‘domestic violence’ and ‘abuse in the home’. Some terms may appear to minimise and marginalise the impact and effect of the actions. It is important to remember the vast range of abusive behaviour: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse and financial abuse.

Examples are:

- Destructive criticism and verbal abuse: shouting, mocking, accusing, name calling, verbally threatening, lying to the victim/survivor or to their friends and family, persistently putting her down in front of other people, never listening or responding when she talks, isolating her from friends and family, monitoring her phone calls, emails, texts and letters, checking up on her, following her, not letting her go out alone.
- Pressure tactics: sulking, threatening to withhold money or disconnect the telephone or take the car away or commit suicide or take the children away or report the victim/survivor to welfare agencies unless she complies with his demands regarding bringing up the children, lying to her friends and family about her, telling her that she has no choice in any decisions.
- Disrespect: persistently putting the victim/survivor down in front of other people, not listening or responding when she talks, interrupting her telephone calls, taking money from her purse without asking, refusing to help with childcare or housework.
- Breaking trust: lying to the victim/survivor,

withholding information from her, being jealous, having other relationships, breaking promises and shared agreements.

- Isolation: monitoring or blocking the victim/survivor's telephone calls, telling you where she can and cannot go, preventing her from seeing friends and relatives.
- Harassment: following the victim/survivor, checking up on her, opening her mail, repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned her, embarrassing her in public.
- Threats: making angry gestures, using physical size to intimidate, shouting the victim/survivor down, destroying her possessions, breaking things, punching walls, wielding a knife or a gun, threatening to kill or harm her and the children.
- Sexual violence: using force, threats or intimidation to make the victim/survivor perform sexual acts, having sex with her when she doesn't want to have sex, any degrading treatment based on her sexual orientation.
- Physical violence: punching, slapping, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair out, pushing, shoving, burning, strangling.
- Denial: saying the abuse doesn't happen, saying the victim/survivor caused the abusive behaviour, being publicly gentle and patient, crying and begging for forgiveness, saying it will never happen again
- Financial abuse: controlling/monitoring use of money and economic resources, destroying belongings, generating economic costs, refusing to contribute to household and child costs, interfering with a victim/survivor's ability to work or undertake education and training.

## Honour-based violence

Honour-based violence is a violent crime or incident

which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community. It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. Crimes of 'honour' do not always include violence and might include:

- sexual or psychological abuse
- forced marriage
- being taken and held against the victim/survivor's will
- assault.

## Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. A forced marriage is when the potential bride, groom or both are forced into marrying against their will, usually by their families.

The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (for example, when someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family). Financial abuse (taking the victim/survivor's wages or not giving her any money) can also be a factor. Men or women may be tricked into going abroad on a 'family holiday' and may be subjected to all these abuses and pressures until they 'agree' to the marriage. Victims may be imprisoned and threatened with abandonment by their families if they resist the marriage.

## Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO)

as 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons'.

Different regions and communities practice various forms of mutilation. The procedure is traditionally carried out by an older woman with no medical training. The age at which the practice is carried out varies. The most common age is between four and 10. The charity Forward estimates that as many as 6,500 girls are at risk of FGM within the UK every year. FGM is against the law in the UK and is recognised as a form of child abuse.

## Stalking

According to the British Crime Survey there are approximately 120,000 predominantly vulnerable female victims of stalking each year. This is likely to be the tip of the iceberg. Research (by Sheridan, L., 2005, paper on key findings from the [www.stalkingsurvey.com](http://www.stalkingsurvey.com)) has found that 75% of domestic stalkers will target their victim at work, with 79% of male perpetrators using their work resources to target the victim. The majority of stalkers who attend the workplace will be ex-partners of the victims, who also experienced domestic abuse within the relationship.

Laura Richards, Director of Paladin (the National Stalking Advocacy Service) warns that 'Many victims we work with are stalked at their place of work and it has a serious impact on their performance as well as attendance levels due to the psychological impact, stress and anxiety. Many also need time off to attend repeat legal appointments. Some stalkers may escalate to serious harm and murder. I have reviewed many cases that have tragically ended in murder and yet the links have not been made. Employers have a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. It is vital that employers protect their staff with the relevant policies and offer them the appropriate support to keep them safe.'

## Why do we call it domestic abuse?

Abuse is abuse so why do we call the violence and abuse that happens in the home 'domestic'? Doesn't this just trivialise the seriousness of it?

One of the reasons is that calling it 'domestic' abuse differentiates it from 'stranger' violence and so allows us to explore some of the crucial differences. It is important to acknowledge these differences because they can help us to understand why women may respond to their experiences in a certain way.

Some differences are:

- The victim/survivor and the perpetrator are known to one another which means that feelings of betrayal of trust may be involved. Usually, the people involved live, or used to live, together.
- Unlike stranger violence, domestic abuse occurs overwhelmingly in private and behind closed doors. This allows perpetrators to argue in court that they are 'not a danger to the general public'.
- 'Outsiders' tend, on the whole, to take domestic abuse less seriously and are more likely to seek to blame the victim/survivor for the occurrence.
- Domestic abuse rarely happens once, and tends to increase in frequency or severity over time. The victim/survivor may find that challenging the abuse on her own leads to an increase in abuse from the perpetrator.
- The perpetrator has on-going access to the victim/survivor which has implications for which options for action are safe.
- Often the victim/survivor has feelings of care towards her assailant and hopes that he will change. This makes the situations very complex and means that there are rarely simple solutions.
- The abuser knows how to get to her, how to hurt her, often in subtle ways that may not be

understood by others.

- Injuries can be easily targeted on places where they are not seen.

Attacks are often presented as momentary loss of control, but are more likely to be part of a continuous pattern of threats, bullying and assaults which are used to maintain power and control. They are the legacy of women being seen as objects or as property, and abusive partners are often protected by myths and stereotypes.

The very term 'domestic' implies a marital squabble, a private and personal matter which merits no intervention from outside, rather than a pernicious – and possibly life-threatening – social evil. The abusive man may be excused by society: perhaps he was reacting to his wife's 'nagging'. The woman may be blamed for 'bringing it on herself' or being 'addicted' to violence. This is a myth: the responsibility for abuse lies with the abuser.

The effects of domestic abuse can only be outlined here, but anyone who wants to help a woman experiencing domestic abuse needs to be aware that these effects may be both far-reaching and long-term, possibly lasting years after the abuse took place.

A woman experiencing domestic abuse may feel afraid, ashamed and unable to confide in others or to seek help. Brutalised women often lack self-confidence and self-esteem, yet still feel responsible for keeping the family together and for maintaining relationships. Family, friends and outside organisations may reinforce these feelings. The woman may be too frightened of the abuser and his power, real or imagined, to leave.

Black women and minority ethnic women have to also face racism and additional stereotyping. Language barriers can intensify the difficulty and humiliation in communicating about abusive experience. The real or perceived threat of deportation may be used. Benefits and housing may not be available. A reluctance to feed racist

stereotypes may help maintain loyalty to a partner, perhaps with additional pressure from an extended family network not to leave. There may be pressure from the community not to be open about such issues which can make contacting the police and other statutory agencies even more difficult (see the further contacts section).

Disabled women can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence. They can even experience it at the hands of their principal carer, who may expect tolerance of such abuse as a form of gratitude for being helped. Disabled women may fear isolation if they leave. The lack of accessible refuges and temporary accommodation, the scarcity of information on tape or in Braille, and the unavailability of sign language interpreters may compound the problems that disabled women fleeing abuse face.

LGBT people are also vulnerable to domestic abuse, from their partners, ex-partners or family members. Surveys show that at least one in four LGBT people experience domestic violence.

One of the major barriers to recognising LGBT domestic abuse is that the abuse has traditionally been portrayed as a heterosexual issue. Lesbian, bisexual women and trans women can experience the same issues of power and control within their relationships as in any couple, which may manifest itself as physical, sexual, verbal and economic abuse.

There are also issues that are specific to LGBT women. The perpetrator – a partner, ex-partner or family member – may use their sexual orientation or gender identity against them. This is only an effective tool to exercise power and control because they occur in the broader context of marginalisation and discrimination against LGBT people. Examples include:

- threats to out the person to their employer or family – to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent
- fears that no-one will help because they think the person 'deserves' the abuse (perhaps because



of a belief that service providers are homo/bi/transphobic or heterosexist)

- the myth that abuse in same sex relationships is 'mutual'
- undermining the person's sense of identity
- controlling the person's access to social networks, particularly LGBT support networks.

All these factors can also act as a barrier to women getting help, with a very high proportion not reporting abuse to the police. LGBT women may also fear approaching mainstream domestic abuse services, thinking they will meet prejudice or lack of understanding. Trans women may have particular concerns about how they will be received. Women's refuges may not feel safe to someone fleeing a violent woman partner as a female perpetrator may be able to access women's refuges unless the staff are aware and vigilant.

It is vital that all domestic abuse services are informed and able to meet the needs of LGBT women. But it is also vital to publicise widely the specialist support available to LGBT people (see the further contacts section).

## Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Many perpetrators of domestic abuse don't come into contact with the criminal justice system. Even if they are convicted and imprisoned, they will soon be back in the community, often back in the same family. They may have ongoing contact with their children, even if the relationship with the child's mother has ended. When one relationship ends, most perpetrators have other relationships, creating new victims/survivors.

It is important that employers recognise that they have a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds and are clear that abuse is always unacceptable. Employers should be seen to respond appropriately to perpetrators to promote the safety of victims/survivors and children. It is far more likely that a perpetrator will reveal information about their violence and abuse to people they know, such as someone at their work. There may be signs of uncharacteristic or other types of behaviour that may be indicative of a concern. Perpetrators may also use workplace resources such as telephones and emails to threaten, harass, stalk or abuse their current or former partner, through which work colleagues may become aware of the abuse. The abuse may also come to light as a result of allegations made, notification by the police or the employee needing time off to attend court. Some men may voluntarily ask for help to deal with their abusive behaviour.

Acts of domestic violence can be a criminal offence, but the fact that an employee has been charged with a criminal offence may not in itself be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal, unless this is specifically covered by the workplace code of conduct. Employers will need to consider whether there is a connection between the abusive behaviour and their role at work and the extent to which the employee's role involves contact with, or poses a risk to, other employees and the general public.

If the victim/survivor and the perpetrator work in the same organisation, in addition to considering potential disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. Action (such as change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing access to information) may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor.

One of the most common requests from victims/survivors is for someone to work with their partner, to help him change and to keep them safe from his violence. Employers can help perpetrators to end their abusive behaviour by providing information about the services and support available to them, and encouraging the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source, such as the Respect Phoneline.

Respect is the UK membership association for Domestic Violence Prevention Programmes and Integrated Support Services. Domestic violence prevention programmes are community based groupwork programmes which work directly with perpetrators with the aim of changing their behaviour and stopping further abuse and violence. Research is ongoing about the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes.

The Respect Phoneline is a confidential helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators (male, female, in mixed or same sex relationships). They offer information and advice to support perpetrators to stop their violence and change their abusive behaviours.

**If you are worried about your behaviour towards your partner, or if you have been abusive or violent, you can get information from the Respect Phonenumber.**

**Call 0808 802 4040 (free from landlines and most mobile phones).**

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. You can leave a message when the lines are closed or busy and they will get back to you within two working days.

**Email: [info@respectphonenumber.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphonenumber.org.uk)**

**[www.respectphonenumber.org.uk](http://www.respectphonenumber.org.uk)**

## Facts about domestic abuse

- **Any woman can be abused.** She might be any woman you come into contact with – your sister, your daughter, your mother, your friend, your workmate or your neighbour. It is mainly working class women who use refuges as they often have less access to money or other places to go.
- **There is no excuse for domestic abuse.** No-one 'deserves' being beaten up or mentally tortured, or the abuse that women going to refuges have received. The so-called provocation has often been simply to ask for money for food, not to have a meal ready on time etc. Women often blame themselves at first but there is no justification for abuse.
- **Some men may have been drinking or misusing drugs when they are violent, but drink and drugs can provide an easy excuse.** It can also be easier for a woman to believe that a man wouldn't have hit her if he were sober. There isn't one type of man who beats a woman. Domestic abuse cannot be blamed on alcohol and drugs.
- **Similarly domestic abuse is not caused by being brought up in a violent home, or unemployment, stress or ill-health.** These are only excuses or justifications for an abuser's behaviour.

## Why do women stay?

For those not involved, it can be hard to understand why a woman does not simply leave, or why, having left, she may return, with the process sometimes repeated several times.

Women stay for many reasons ranging from love to terror. A woman may have to face the prospect of living in temporary accommodation, on benefits and in fear of having her children taken into care. Leaving may mean relocating to an unfamiliar area away from family and friends.

My Sisters Place, ([www.mysistersplace.org.uk](http://www.mysistersplace.org.uk)), an independent specialist 'One Stop Shop' based in Middlesbrough for women aged 16 or over who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse, has found that almost 50% of the women they were supporting were employed. Investigation of these cases showed a catalogue of barriers and difficulties in accessing the services they needed, in particular, safe temporary accommodation and legal aid to secure their property rights and the safety of children.

Leaving is an extreme action requiring a strength and resourcefulness that may have been eroded by fear and despair. A woman may be threatened with reprisals: 50% of fleeing women are followed. And as shown by My Sister's Place research, difficulties with housing and money, as well as the range of emotional pressures, often force a woman to return to an abusive partner. Leaving again may cease to be an option.

Displays of confusion and emotional paralysis may lead others to judge that the abuse is not happening or is not serious; the woman may want to believe that too. A victim/survivor needs to be supported to make changes at her own pace, with the benefit of reliable information about the choices open to her and the unambiguous message that abusive behaviour is intolerable.

It is important to understand that leaving an abusive relationship is not a single act but a process.

## What can UNISON do?

UNISON has established policy that recognises that domestic abuse is a gendered issue and is committed to working with the women members' self-organised groups, branches and regions in developing and negotiating workplace policies on domestic abuse.

UNISON also supports and lobbies for the UK to enact the UN statutory definition of violence against women: 'Any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life'.

As the charity Women's Aid highlights, when people are living with domestic abuse, it affects the whole of their lives, including their work. Home Office research (Roe, S. 2010) showed that one in 10 people who experienced domestic violence are forced to take time off work because of the effects of the abuse. In 2009, research showed that domestic violence cost UK businesses at least £1.9 billion in lost economic output caused by physical injuries alone.

However, research has also shown that more than one in 10 victims/survivors of domestic abuse choose to confide in a manager or colleague, so it's important that they receive the right support and assistance.

Women members who are abused should be in no doubt that UNISON is there to support them personally at all levels - locally and nationally - through campaigning and lobbying on the issues to changing the way abused women are treated. The union is committed to raising awareness of the effects of domestic abuse among members and their employers, and of finding ways to help victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

## What branches can do

Branches can raise the issues of domestic abuse and its effects with employers, among the membership and with activists.

Local branch welfare officers may be the first point of contact for members who are experiencing domestic abuse and associated personal, emotional or financial difficulties. These officers are also the local representative of There for You (UNISON welfare). There for You provides a confidential service for members over the phone or in person and may also be able to offer financial support and give debt advice.

**You can contact There for You on 020 7121 5620  
or email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)  
or speak to your branch welfare officer.**

A support system for members experiencing domestic abuse could also be established at branch level. The branch women's group might undertake its co-ordination, perhaps with the LGBT members', disabled members' and Black members' groups, or it might be easier to initiate at regional level.

The branch should make sure that any support available is well publicised so that any woman knows who to approach directly, without having to ask stewards or branch officers who may not be directly involved. The support needed is likely to be both personal and practical.

There are a number of practical measures that branches should consider:

- ensuring all members are aware of There for You (UNISON welfare) services and how to access them
- making information on existing services available, with a stock of appropriate leaflets
- obtaining emergency welfare funds to assist a woman's flight

- establishing links with local agencies, such as Women's Aid and refuges, legal aid solicitors, the housing advice centre, a local rape crisis centre (contacts should be available in the telephone directory, through your local authority or public library, or see the further contacts section)
- supporting a local refuge and lobbying for its support by local authorities and others
- affiliating to appropriate national campaigns and their local groups.

Branch and workplace reps can also work with employers on implementing a domestic abuse policy. A model workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse is available on page 22. It's key that all branch reps know what advice and support is available to recipients of domestic abuse.

## Why should employers have a policy?

Domestic abuse results in:

- decreased productivity
- increased absenteeism
- increased errors
- increased employee turnover

and in many cases the violence and abuse can spill out of the home and into the workplace.

Domestic violence also affects other staff who may:

- have to fill in for absent or non-productive colleagues
- feel resentful of victims/survivors needing time off or receiving extra attention
- try to protect victims/survivors from unwanted phone calls and visits

- be completely unaware of how to intervene, often feeling helpless and distracted from their work
- fear for their own safety
- hear and/or take part in harmful gossip and rumours.

Branch and workplace reps can also encourage employers to sign up to the Public Health Responsibility Deal pledge on domestic violence. This states: **'We will treat people within our organisation with respect and dignity. We will do everything we can to prevent stalking, violence or abuse either in the workplace or that which has an effect on people in the workplace, whether from a colleague, family member or anyone else. This will include having guidance in place which is suitable to the size of our organisation. The guidance will ensure that an appropriate, safe and sensitive response can be implemented and our employees supported when they raise such an issue.'**

This Department of Health initiative aims for organisations to commit to taking action voluntarily to improve public health through their responsibilities as employers, as well as through their commercial actions and their community activities.

**More details from <https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/pledges/pledge/?pl=46>.**

- job flexibility, with understanding about the possible need to work irregular hours and for special paid leave
- no penalisation through sickness absence monitoring policies
- if redeployment is requested, everything should be done to achieve it at no cost to the woman, and her new working location should not be revealed
- provision of independent and confidential counselling at no cost to the woman and in working hours
- adequate facility time for members of the branch involved in supporting a woman fleeing abuse
- appropriate training and awareness raising for managers and HR officers so that they are able to support staff experiencing abuse and deal with any associated intimidation of colleagues if the abuser visits the woman's workplace
- ensure that health and safety risk assessments are carried out to protect employees
- encourage employers to develop guidelines and good practice on domestic abuse, not just for their staff through a workplace policy but also the community, working in conjunction both with UNISON and appropriate outside agencies, such as Women's Aid
- ensuring effective publicity about all these service conditions to all staff.

## Negotiation with employers

Branches should put the following issues on the negotiating agenda with employers:

- reassurance that any woman seeking help will be assisted in the strictest confidence
- reassurance for a woman experiencing domestic abuse that her job is secure, with help to minimise the disruption in her life

## Risk assessments

If domestic violence is disclosed, the employer should consider undertaking a work place risk assessment to ensure that the potential risk to the employee and work colleagues is minimised. If there is a reason to consider that the employee's (ex-)partner presents a risk to other employees then the employer can also consider taking legal action to protect the workplace.

The employee should be encouraged to contact a specialist domestic violence service (see the further contacts section) who can assess the risk that a victim is exposed to by using a risk assessment tool such as the DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence) risk assessment ([www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk](http://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk)).

Some organisations (for example, local authorities) may have a staff member who is a specialist in domestic violence and has training in the use of the DASH. If this is the case then they can undertake such an assessment. The professional will ask the employee questions related to the risk factors and will then work with the victim and the employer to manage that risk.

In cases where an employee is considered to be a high or very high risk victim then it is likely that they will be referred to a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARACs are monthly multi-agency meetings that aim to increase the protection of high risk victims of domestic violence through a broad range of supportive interventions.

### Special paid leave

Many workplace domestic abuse policies make important links with other existing policies that allow, for example, individuals to change working patterns and take special leave. For a victim/survivor to find a new home, get a place at a refuge, secure new school places for her children, receive legal advice, open a new bank account, seek medical help and counselling, it will take a considerable amount of time as well as money. Paid leave is essential to help facilitate these practical arrangements.

Unions in Australia have successfully campaigned on domestic violence as a workplace issue and have negotiated 20 days of paid leave in cases of domestic violence across the whole of the public sector.

**The UNISON branch of Luton Borough Council successfully negotiated within their domestic abuse policy support for victims/survivors that included 'special paid leave up to a maximum of 20 days for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.'**

**Newcastle City Council have also agreed to a 'provision to grant up to two weeks special leave with pay for a variety of purposes, including for an unforeseen personal or domestic crisis. Managers should look sympathetically at requests for reasonable time-off with pay for employees who have disclosed that they are experiencing domestic violence.'**

The ability to take time off work without facing disciplinary action or losing out on pay is crucial for survivors of domestic abuse who are trying to flee an abusive relationship.

### The benefits for our members of employer policies

- It raises awareness of the issue in the workplace.
- It makes clear the employer position on domestic violence and abuse.
- It has the potential to make disclosing less terrifying.
- It encourages a sympathetic response.
- The employer is less likely to initiate disciplinary/capability/attendance procedures on victims/survivors.
- Risk assessments will be undertaken – protecting recipients and their colleagues in the workplace.
- We are more likely to appreciate and support the voluntary sector services available.



## Checklist of what should be included in a workplace domestic violence and abuse policy

- Principles and commitment
- Legal obligations
- Definitions of domestic abuse, including a statement that it can occur in mixed and same sex relationships, and in the extended family
- Clear indicators to identify domestic abuse
- Support services available and how to access them
- Specific roles and responsibilities for managers
- HR involvement and training
- Working together with trade unions
- Specific roles and responsibilities of employees
- Confidentiality and record keeping
- When both parties are employees – managing ongoing safety issues – safety planning
- Perpetrators of domestic violence
- Training/awareness raising for all staff
- Special paid leave
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- Changes in specific duties
- Redeployment or relocation
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment
- Training courses for victims/survivors with time off to attend
- Links with other existing policies (eg code of conduct, flexible working policy, harassment and bullying policy, sickness absence monitoring)
- Monitoring and review.

## Further contacts

### National Domestic Violence helpline

Run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, open 24 hours  
Call freephone 0808 2000 247

### Men's Advice Line

For men experiencing domestic abuse  
Call freephone 0808 801 0327  
[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

### Women's Aid

Women's Aid is the national domestic violence charity that helps up to 250,000 women and children every year. They work to end violence against women and children, and support over 350 domestic and sexual violence services across the country.  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

### Welsh Women's Aid

Call freephone 0808 80 10800  
[www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)

### Scottish Women's Aid

Call freephone 0800 027 1234  
[www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk](http://www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk)

### Northern Ireland Women's Aid

Call freephone 0808 802 1414 (for women and men)  
[www.womensaidni.org](http://www.womensaidni.org)

### Refuge

Refuge has grown to become the country's largest single provider of specialist domestic violence services. On any given day they support over 2,000 women and children.  
<http://refuge.org.uk>

### Respect

Respect is the national association for professionals working with people to end their abusive behaviour. Refuge and Respect have worked together to produce a comprehensive resource designed to help employers and HR professionals respond to employees who are victims/survivors or perpetrators of abuse, which was endorsed by UNISON's national delegate conference in 2010. Details can be found at [www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html](http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html)  
[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

### White Ribbon Campaign

This campaign is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women. It is an educational organisation, encouraging reflection and discussion that leads to personal and collective action among men.  
[www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk)

### Support for LGBT people

#### Broken Rainbow UK

Broken Rainbow UK provide a national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic abuse helpline providing confidential support to all members of LGBT communities, their family and friends. Call 0300 999 5428, Mondays and Thursdays 10am to 8pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10am to 5pm. There is also a trans specific service Tuesday 1pm to 5pm.

Outside these hours, you can email [help@brokenrainbow.org.uk](mailto:help@brokenrainbow.org.uk) or there is online chat on the website [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk).

Support for Black women and children and those from minority ethnic communities

### **Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit**

If you feel concerned about a potential forced marriage you should contact the unit on 020 7008 0151 or email: [fmufco.gov.uk](mailto:fmufco.gov.uk)  
The Unit can also speak about forced marriage at conferences or run training workshops for large groups. Email for outreach work: [fmufcooutreach@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmufcooutreach@fco.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage)

### **Southall Black Sisters**

Southall Black Sisters is a not-for-profit organisation set up to meet the needs of Black (Asian and African-Caribbean) and minority ethnic women. For more than three decades they have been at the forefront of challenging domestic and gender violence locally and nationally.  
Call: 0208 571 0800  
General enquiries: 0208 571 9595  
[www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)

### **Karma Nirvana**

This charity supports victims and survivors of Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse and run a helpline. Their aim is to raise public awareness on the issues and in breaking the silence. They provide education through accredited training, including seminars, conferences and workshops.  
Honour Network Helpline: 0800 5999 247  
[www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

### **Forward**

Forward is an African Diaspora women's campaign and support charity existing to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights as central to the wellbeing of African women and girls. They work with individuals, communities and organisations to transform harmful practices and improve the quality

of life of vulnerable girls and women.  
[www.forwarduk.org.uk](http://www.forwarduk.org.uk)

### **Daughters of Eve**

This non profit organisation works to advance and protect the physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health rights of young people from female genital mutilation practising communities.  
[www.dofeve.org](http://www.dofeve.org)

### **Muslim Community Helpline**

The Muslim Community Helpline aims to provide a listening and emotional support service for members of the community in the United Kingdom.  
Call: 0208 904 8193 or 020 8908 6715, Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm.  
[www.muslimcommunityhelpline.org.uk](http://www.muslimcommunityhelpline.org.uk)

### **Nour**

Nour is a charity which aims to engage the public, and especially the minority Muslim communities, to become aware and take action against domestic violence. They are able to offer access to Islamic advisors, professional advisors and legal advisors.  
<http://nour-dv.org.uk>

### **The Kiran Project**

The Kiran Project was set up in 1990 to meet the needs of women from the Indian sub-continent experiencing domestic violence.  
[www.kiranproject.org.uk](http://www.kiranproject.org.uk)

### **The Chinese Information and Advice Centre (CIAC)**

CIAC provides free information, advice and support to disadvantaged Chinese people living in the UK. This includes supporting women and children who are victims, or at risk of domestic violence.  
[www.ciac.co.uk](http://www.ciac.co.uk)

### **Jewish Women's Aid**

Jewish Women's Aid is the only specialist organisation in the UK supporting Jewish women affected by domestic violence.

Helpline: 0808 801 0500, 9.30am to 9.30pm – Monday to Thursday

Head Office: 020 8445 8060

[www.jwa.org.uk](http://www.jwa.org.uk)

### **BAWSO**

BAWSO is an all Wales organisation delivering specialist services to people from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds who are affected by domestic abuse and other forms of abuse, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, human trafficking and prostitution.

24 hour helpline: 0800 731 8147

Tel: 029 20644 633

Email: [Info@bawso.org.uk](mailto:Info@bawso.org.uk)

[www.bawso.org.uk](http://www.bawso.org.uk)

### **JAN Trust**

JAN Trust was formed to support and provide services to grass root and hard to reach communities because it was noticed that their needs were not being met in order for them to feel and be part of society. It is dedicated to the cause of combating poverty, discrimination, abuse and social exclusion among Black, Asian, minority ethnic, refugee and asylum women.

Tel: 0208 889 9433

Email: [info@jantrust.org](mailto:info@jantrust.org)

[www.jantrust.org](http://www.jantrust.org)

## Legal support

### **Rights of Women**

Rights of Women is a women's voluntary organisation committed to informing, educating and empowering women concerning their legal rights.

Family law advice line for advice on issues including domestic violence and abuse.

Call 020 7251 6577 (telephone) or 020 7490 2562

(textphone) on Mondays 7pm to 9pm, Tuesdays 7pm to 9pm, Wednesday 7pm to 9pm, Thursday 7pm to 9pm and Fridays 12noon to 2pm  
[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)

### **The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV)**

The Centre provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation. They work in close partnership with the police, local firms of solicitors and other support agencies (Refuge, Women's Aid etc) to help survivors obtain speedy protection.

Freephone: 0800 970 2070

Minicom service: 18001 08009 702070

[www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

## Other support

### **The National Stalking Helpline**

This helpline provides guidance and information to anybody who is currently or has previously been affected by harassment or stalking.

Call 0808 802 0300

Email [advice@stalkinghelpline.org](mailto:advice@stalkinghelpline.org)

[www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)

### **Paladin – National Stalking Advocacy Service**

Paladin assists high risk victims of stalking throughout England and Wales.

<http://paladinservice.co.uk/>

### **Network for Surviving Stalking**

This charity represents UK stalking victims/survivors and their families.

[www.nss.org.uk](http://www.nss.org.uk)

### **Action Scotland Against Stalking**

This website provides helpful information for anyone who is being stalked.

[www.scotlandagainststalking.com](http://www.scotlandagainststalking.com)

## **Respond**

Respond works with children and adults with learning disabilities who have experienced abuse or trauma, as well as those who have abused others, through psychotherapy, advocacy, campaigning and other support. Respond also aims to prevent abuse by providing training, consultancy and research.  
[www.respond.org.uk](http://www.respond.org.uk)

## **The National Child Protection Helpline**

Report your concern or get advice and support on NSPCC's free 24/7 adult helpline by phone, text or online.  
Call 0808 800 5000  
Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)  
Text: 88858

## **Childline**

Support for children and young people.  
Call 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Get Connected**

Free confidential help for young people aged under 25.  
Call 0808 808 4994  
[www.getconnected.org.uk](http://www.getconnected.org.uk)

## **National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)**

NAPAC is a registered charity, based in the UK, providing support and information for people abused in childhood.  
Support line: 0800 085 3330 or 0808 801 0331.  
10am till 9pm Monday to Thursday and 10am till 6pm on Friday.  
[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

## **Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Violence (for bereaved friends and family)**

Helping families after fatal domestic abuse through listening and via practical help by informing, guiding,

advocating and enabling.  
[www.aafda.org.uk](http://www.aafda.org.uk)

## **The Sara Charlton Charitable Foundation**

A grant-making charity dedicated to helping victims of domestic abuse, including honour-based violence, in the United Kingdom.  
[www.saracharlton.org.uk](http://www.saracharlton.org.uk)

## **Rape Crisis**

Rape Crisis England & Wales is a feminist organisation that exists to promote the needs of women and girls who have experienced sexual violence, to improve services to them and to work towards the elimination of sexual violence.  
Freephone helpline 0808 802 9999  
[www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

## **Rape Crisis Scotland**

Free helpline 08088 01 03 02  
[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

## **Rape Crisis Network Ireland**

[www.rcni.ie](http://www.rcni.ie)

## **Samaritans**

Call 08457 90 90 90 (UK)  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## **Victim support**

Call 0845 3030 900  
[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

## **Crimestoppers**

Call 0800 555 111  
[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

## Model workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse

This agreement is made between  
[THE EMPLOYER] and UNISON, a registered trade union.

This agreement comes into force on:

This agreement will be reviewed on:

Date

Date

Signed on behalf of [THE EMPLOYER]

Signed on behalf of UNISON

Date

Date

## Principles and commitment

It is (employer's name)'s policy that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically and confidentially. This policy also covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse.

We are committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees will be experiencing domestic abuse and that the workplace should be a place of safety and one that recognises that perpetrators of domestic abuse are responsible for their behaviour and for addressing this.

Through this domestic abuse policy and working to reduce the risks related to domestic abuse, we aim to create a safer workplace and send out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

(Employer's name) recognises that domestic abuse is an equalities issue and undertakes to not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse both in terms of current employment or future development.

This policy is part of (employer's name)'s commitment to family friendly working, and seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of (employer's name) as an employer of choice.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (1996), (employer's name) recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all staff. Therefore this policy applies to staff across all sites as well as agency and contract staff (and elected members).

## Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic violence and abuse is best described as the use of physical and/or emotional abuse or violence, including undermining of self confidence, sexual violence or the threat of violence, by any person, who is or has been in a close relationship with the victims/survivors, including abuse of parents or adult children. This policy is therefore applicable whatever the nature of the intimate relationship.

The government definition is:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: 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 their victim.'

This definition includes stalking and so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

Domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women are most commonly perpetrated by men against women. However (employer's name) recognises that controlling and abusive behaviour can also occur in same sex relationships and can be perpetrated by women against men.

All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners.

- Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical ability.
- Once it has started it often becomes more frequent and more violent.
- It can severely affect children emotionally and physically.
- Victims/survivors are sometimes beaten or harassed by members of their immediate or extended family.
- Domestic abuse is gendered – the majority of perpetrators are men and between 80-95% of those who experience it are women, although it does also occur against men in mixed or same sex relationships.
- Domestic abuse is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victims/survivors. On average a victim/survivor of domestic abuse is assaulted 35 times before they report the matter to the police.

## Identification of the problem at work

While it is for the individual themselves to recognise

they are a victim/survivor of domestic abuse, there are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim/survivor. These may include the following:

- the member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager
- staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse
- there may be obvious effects of physical abuse (it is important not to make assumptions)
- it may come to light as a result of enquiries into a drop in performance or a significant change in behaviour
- it may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance or presenteeism – where victims/survivors prefer to be at work rather than at home.

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Line managers should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.

(Employer's name) respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst (employer's name) strongly encourages victims/survivors of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to.

## Confidentiality and right to privacy

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

Where domestic abuse in a same sex relationship is disclosed, due regard will be paid to the double disclosure of confidential information if the individual recipient of abuse is not out at work.



There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees.

In circumstances where (employer's name) has to breach confidentiality, it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, it will discuss with the employee why it is doing so and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible.

As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

## Support for individuals

(Employer's name) recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and (employer's name) will provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse.

(Employer's name) and UNISON representatives will work together co-operatively to help staff experiencing domestic abuse.

(Employer's name) will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

Line managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments
- temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- redeployment or relocation
- measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- using other existing policies, including flexible working
- access to counselling/support services in paid time
- an advance of pay
- access to courses developed to support female survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme ([www.freedomprogramme.co.uk](http://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk)) or assertiveness training.

Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action at every stage and should avoid being judgemental. It must be recognised that the employee may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process.

Other existing provisions (including occupational health, independent counselling services) will also be signposted to staff as a means of help.

## Organisational planning

All employees will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisal, leaflets and posters.

(Employer's name) will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

- provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
- discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning
- signpost to other organisations and sources of support
- understand that they are not counsellors.

## Disclosure of abuse

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or colleague. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel victims/survivors, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost other organisations.

(Employer's name) will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are suffering from domestic abuse.

A member of human resources trained in domestic abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff. This person will also provide guidance for line managers and union representatives who are approached by staff who are being abused.

## Safety planning

(Employer's name) will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers may have to consider incidents such as violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phonecalls, intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator, and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, (employer's name) will encourage its employee to contact a specialist support agency (or suitably trained specialist member of staff) who can undertake a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence risk assessment– [www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk](http://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk)) and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

(Employer's name) will work with the employee and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, taking into account the duty of care for all employees.

## Training

(Employer's name) is committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of domestic abuse and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings or awareness raising sessions will ensure that all managers are able to:

- identify if an employee is experiencing difficulties because of domestic abuse
- respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner

## Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. (Employer's name) recognises that it has a role in encouraging

and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

If an employee approaches (employer's name) about their abusive behaviour, (employer's name) will provide information about the services and support available to them, and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

(Employer's name) will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- disciplinary action by the employer
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk.

An individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to the organisation's code of conduct policy and procedure. (Employer's name) also reserves the right to consider the use of this policy should an employee's activities outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction) have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute. In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in his/her current role(s). In these circumstances the possibility of redeployment into an alternative role may be considered.

(Employer's name) views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the organisation's code of conduct for disciplinary purposes.

(Employer's name)'s code of conduct is intended to inform all staff, irrespective of grade, of the standards of conduct expected of them. It identifies

a set of principles governing behaviour by which staff members are expected to abide. Staff members are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation.

(Employer's name) is committed to ensuring that:

- allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- all employees will receive guidance and support
- confidentiality will be maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know
- investigations will be thorough and independent
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays
- all efforts will be made to resolve the matter within four to six weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity.

NOTE: This procedure is intended to be safety focussed and supportive rather than punitive.

The alleged perpetrator will be:

- treated fairly and honestly
- helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process
- advised to contact their union or professional organisation.

Any employee who is responsible for giving advice or support to those experiencing domestic abuse needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators.

If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, email or fax machines then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

If it becomes evident that an employee has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

### If the victim/survivor and the perpetrator work in the same organisation

In cases where both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator of domestic abuse work in the organisation, (employer's name) will take appropriate action.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the employee who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace.

Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or offices.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating domestic abuse in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations appropriate support should be given.

### Role of colleagues

(Employer's name) encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, employers should ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

### Review

This policy will be reviewed jointly every three years unless there are changes in legislation, best practice or other organisation policies impact on its effectiveness.

### Further guidance

[Provide here local contact details for :

- Domestic violence co-ordinator
- Police
- Social services
- Housing advice
- Drug and alcohol advice
- GPs and health visitors
- Perpetrators' programme providers]

Anyone using this policy to respond to a victim/survivor or perpetrator of domestic abuse should refer to further current information provided by Refuge [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk). Refuge offers a range of services which give women and children access to professional support whatever their situation.

## **If you are concerned for your own or someone else's immediate safety, ring the police on 999**

**If you or a friend needs help call 0808 2000 247 the freephone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline** (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) or

email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk). The helpline is a member of Language Line and can provide access to an interpreter for non-English speaking callers. The helpline can also access the BT Type Talk Service.

**You can also contact:**

**0808 802 1414 – Northern Ireland Women's Aid 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline (for women and men)**

**0800 027 1234 – Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline**

**0808 80 10 800 – All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline**

**Broken Rainbow UK** runs a national LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) domestic violence helpline providing confidential support to all members of the LGBT communities, their family & friends.

**Call 0300 999 5428, Mondays and Thursdays 10am to 8pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10am to 5pm. There is also a trans specific service Tuesdays 1pm to 5pm. Outside these hours, you can email [help@brokenrainbow.org.uk](mailto:help@brokenrainbow.org.uk) or there is online chat on the website [www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk).**

**Men's Advice Line** for men experiencing domestic violence.

**Call 0808 801 0327 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm or email: [info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk)**

**If you are worried about your behaviour towards your partner, or if you have been abusive or violent, you can get information from the Respect Phonenumber. Call 0808 802 4040 (free from landlines and most mobile phones). Monday – Friday 9am-5pm**

You can leave a message when the lines are closed or busy and they will get back to you within 2 working days. **Email: [info@respectphonenumber.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphonenumber.org.uk) [www.respectphonenumber.org.uk](http://www.respectphonenumber.org.uk)**





