



Think Business, Think Equality

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## INTRODUCTION

This guidance is for small and medium businesses who want to improve gender diversity in their workplace. It accompanies the Think Business, Think Equality online self-assessment tool. The free online tool enables you to assess your current employment practice and provides tailored advice and guidance on how your business can benefit from gender diversity.

Delivering workplace equality makes good business sense. Having fair and flexible working practices allows you to attract and retain the best talent, reduce recruitment and training costs, and makes your business more productive, more innovative, and more profitable.

This guidance enables employers to develop a domestic abuse workplace policy and provides information on how to manage and support an employee experiencing domestic abuse. It makes clear that there are simple steps employers can take to respond to domestic abuse and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff.

It is recognised that both men and women experience domestic abuse and there are some similarities and differences in the effects in the workplace. The focus of this guidance is women's experiences of domestic abuse, as the vast majority of victim-survivors are women.

There is a checklist on page 30 which suggests actions businesses can take to improve their practice in this area.



The Think Business, Think Equality online tool is available at:  
[www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk](http://www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk)

## LEGAL DISCLAIMER

While every effort has been made to ensure that the explanations given here are accurate, only the courts or tribunals can give authoritative interpretations of the law.



# WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner.<sup>1</sup> It affects women from all backgrounds irrespective of age, race, sexual orientation, education, culture and socioeconomic demographic. It is an enduring social problem, with at least one in four women in Scotland experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime. It often doesn't end when a woman has left. Perpetrators may continue to abuse, harass and stalk victim-survivors once the relationship is over. Whilst it is recognised that men experience domestic abuse, it is most commonly experienced by women, with male partners or ex-partners perpetrating the abuse. Domestic abuse also happens in same-sex relationships.

## Domestic abuse and the law

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 was introduced to make all forms of domestic abuse towards a partner or ex-partner whether psychological or physical, a criminal offence. It defines domestic abuse as “a course of behaviour towards a partner or ex-partner intended to cause them physical or psychological harm, or where the perpetrator is reckless as to whether it causes harm.”

Previous to this Act, only physical abuse could be prosecuted as a criminal offence. However, many victim-survivors of domestic abuse may not experience physical abuse,

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Women's Aid, *What is domestic abuse?*, available at [www.womensaid.scot/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse](http://www.womensaid.scot/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse)



but are subject to coercive control, and degrading treatment. Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour that seeks to take away the victim-survivor's freedom, and strip away their sense of self. Within coercive control, violence is often used alongside a range of other tactics including isolation, degradation, and the micromanagement of everyday life. This may include monitoring movements, phone calls, dress, social activity and other relationships. The perpetrator creates a world in which the victim-survivor is constantly monitored, criticised and intimidated.

## Coercive control: Case study

Zara has been with Adam for over two years. At the beginning of their relationship they were very social, and often spent time with friend, family and colleagues. However, over time, things started to change. Adam started to monitor her whereabouts. He would get upset if she didn't constantly check in with him throughout the day and would threaten to show up at her work if she didn't reply to his messages. He started to drive her to work and pick her up. He didn't like her going out with friends because he didn't want her to talk to other men.

He would make comments about her appearance and tell her that she should be grateful to have him because no one else would want her. He would comment on how much make up she wore and tell her that she should be embarrassed to go out in public



looking like that. He became controlling over what she wore and wouldn't let her wear certain clothes because he didn't want other men looking at her. Sometimes he would ruin or destroy her clothes because he didn't like her wearing them.

Over time, Zara stopped seeing her friends and rarely saw her family. She stopped answering their phone calls and arranging to see them. She stopped speaking to her colleagues at work and stopped going on work trips or nights out. She was afraid Adam would be angry if he found out she was talking to them because he said he didn't like them and said she shouldn't spend time with people like that. She felt anxious, depressed and constantly on edge. She felt like she was walking on egg shells and worried about upsetting Adam. She didn't want to tell her friends or family because she worried they wouldn't believe her. She thought that since he wasn't physically violent, then it must not be that bad.



## HOW DOMESTIC ABUSE DISRUPTS WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Historically domestic abuse was considered by some to only affect women at home. However, it extends to all aspects of women's lives, and the workplace is no exception; the majority of women experiencing domestic abuse are also targeted at work.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse often use a number of tactics to disrupt women's employment including:

- Using workplace resources such as phone and email to threaten, harass or abuse them;
- Sending abusive and threatening phone calls, text messages or emails to their personal phone while at work;
- Preventing them from going to work by locking them in, or by hiding their keys or purse;
- Controlling their finances to prevent them from paying transport costs or tampering with their car to prevent them from going to work;
- Following them into their workplace or waiting outside for them;
- Isolating them from their colleagues by not allowing them to attend social events;
- Verbal harassment, assault or threats of assault when women leave to go to work;
- Destroying personal documents which may prevent them from applying for jobs;
- Preventing them from attending development or training courses;
- Sabotaging their work clothes;
- Offering to provide childcare and not turning up;
- Threatening to take the children if they go to work;





- For non-English speakers, preventing them from learning English which would enable them to work; and
- Discouraging them from applying for promotion or positions where they would become the primary earner in the household.

Domestic abuse can create significant barriers which prevent women coming to work and sustaining employment. By understanding abuse and how it impacts staff, colleagues and the wider workplace, you will be better able to develop policies and practices that can best support staff, and ensure your business is not adversely affected.

## Stalking, domestic abuse and the workplace

Stalking is persistent and unwanted behaviour which causes or has the intention to cause fear or alarm. It is a form of surveillance underpinned by the communication of that surveillance.

Stalking is a common tactic used by perpetrators of domestic abuse, but can also be perpetrated by colleagues, neighbours, friends, acquaintances and strangers. The emotional and psychological impact of stalking can result in increased fear, stress and anxiety, and loss of safety or trust. Victim-survivors of stalking worry that it will impact their job because of unexplained or frequent absences to avoid their stalker.

Stalking can have a significant impact on the workplace because stalkers are able to pinpoint the location of their victim when they are at work. Because of this victim-



survivors may turn up late or leave early. For example, some women may want to leave work before it is dark, so it is still light out when they get home which makes them feel safer.

Tactics used by stalkers to disrupt women's employment can include:

- Preventing them from attending work by tampering with their car;
- Using workplace resources such as phones and email to threaten, harass and abuse them;
- Watching or spying on them, or forcing contact with them through any means, including social media;
- Following victims to and from work;
- Sending unwanted gifts or flowers to their work; and
- Targeting their colleagues.

Many women who experience domestic abuse will also be stalked by the same partner or ex-partner. It is therefore good practice to include information about stalking in your domestic abuse policy.



## Different experiences of domestic abuse

Women's experiences of domestic abuse vary according to their multiple identities.

- Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual violence as non-disabled women, particularly when the abuser is also their carer.
- Black and minority ethnic women face additional barriers to accessing appropriate support, and they may feel reluctant to seek support because of concerns about racism, and for some migrant women, potential language barriers.
- Older women are less likely to report their experiences of domestic abuse.
- Lesbian and bisexual women can be vulnerable to perpetrators who threaten to out them to colleagues or their employer, and family members.
- Trans women are vulnerable to transphobic abuse, including emotional abuse, and can be reluctant to access support services or contact the police for fear they may be met with prejudice or that they may not be understood.
- Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse and existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after giving birth.

## How domestic abuse affects women and their workplace

Domestic abuse follows women to work and not only impacts on their health and wellbeing but can also affect their colleagues and ultimately the company they work for. It can disrupt the smooth running of a business by causing reduced productivity, increased absenteeism and adversely affecting staff retention.



## The impact on a staff member

It is common for victim-survivors to be targeted in and around the workplace, and therefore domestic abuse has a profound impact on women's capacity to work. It can have long-term consequences for women and causes damage to women's physical health, mental health and wellbeing. Women report experiencing trauma, stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of domestic abuse and can struggle to find appropriate support in the workplace. Domestic abuse can also affect victim-survivors' capacity to work with men, particularly in situations where there is an existing gender or power imbalance. It can have an effect on women's ability to manage challenging situations, interact with others, or experience career advancement and development.

Women in all job types are likely to prefer to avoid disclosure to their employers, but women in senior roles are particularly likely to seek to avoid "victim" status. There is a perception that senior employees or peers (who are more likely to be male the higher up an organisation a woman rises) may wonder whether a woman experiencing domestic abuse is suitable for the job if it is perceived that she "cannot even take care of her own family problems."

Domestic abuse can cause financial instability or loss of employment because of unexplained lateness or absences. Women often require to take time off work to seek help from specialist support agencies, attend doctor's appointments or move to a new house. In some cases, they may even leave a job to avoid their perpetrator. It is important that staff whose performance or attendance is suffering due to domestic abuse are given the support they need.



Abusive partners may prevent a woman from attending work or accessing development or training opportunities. By restricting a woman's ability to progress or improve her economic position, perpetrators make it more difficult for women to leave. Economic abuse can have a long term impact on women, including restricting her long term employment prospects. Some women take long absences or are unable to complete training qualifications which in turn reduces their earning potential and financial independence.

## The impact on colleagues

Domestic abuse also affects people who are in the victim-survivor's life on a regular basis. This can include work colleagues and this in turn can affect your business. The impact on colleagues can include:

- Having to fill in for absent colleagues, or colleagues who are under-performing;
- Decreased productivity or being distracted from their own work;
- Increased stress or anxiety from being followed to or from work, or being subject to questioning about their colleague's contact details or locations;
- Trying to protect their colleague from unwanted phone calls or visits;
- Feeling helpless and unsure about how to intervene to support a colleague;
- Experiencing a negative impact on their own mental and emotional health, especially if they may also be experiencing abuse themselves;
- Increased staff absence or turnover of key people; and
- Unknowingly assisting the perpetrator to locate their colleague or by covering up for the perpetrator at work.



## The impact on the workplace

Domestic abuse is estimated to cost the UK economy over £66 billion per year,<sup>2</sup> which includes an estimated £14 billion lost due to decreased productivity, administrative difficulties from unplanned time off, lost wages and sick pay. Domestic abuse can have an adverse impact on staff morale, as well as on a business's image and reputation. It therefore makes good business sense for you to support employees affected by domestic abuse.

<sup>2</sup> Home Office (2019) *The economic and social costs of domestic abuse*.



## RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Victim-survivors of domestic abuse usually do not disclose their experience to anyone at work out of fear of not being believed, being judged, being treated as a “victim”, or believing that nothing will change. They may feel embarrassed or humiliated and not want to share such personal details with their colleagues or their employer. This is due to the stigmatisation of domestic abuse in society which can significantly undermine efforts in the workplace to support victim-survivors.

Where a line manager is unaware of, or unsympathetic to, the reasons for persistent lateness, unexplained absences or poor performance, the staff member may be disciplined or in some cases dismissed. Knowing the signs of domestic abuse is therefore important to ensure that you know how to effectively manage the staff member, and support them in their situation.

### Signs around a staff member's productivity may include:

- Changes in the quality of their work for unexplained reasons, despite a previously strong record, such as suddenly starting to miss deadlines;
- Receiving repeated upsetting calls, texts or emails; and
- Constantly checking their mobile phone.

### Signs around a staff member's attendance may include:

- Being persistently late without explanation or needing to leave work early;
- Having more frequent, sporadic absences without explanation;



- Increased hours being worked for no apparent reason i.e. very early arrival at work and/or working late;
- Needing regular time off for appointments; and
- Their partner exerting an unusual amount of control and demand over their work schedule, for example, they may be dropped off and picked up from work and/or unable to attend business trips or events.

### Signs around a staff member's behaviour include:

- Avoiding lunch breaks or socialising at the end of the working day;
- Changes in their behaviour such as becoming quiet, avoiding speaking to colleagues, or withdrawing from social interactions;
- Isolating themselves from friends and family;
- Feeling depressed, anxious, distracted, or having problems with concentration;
- Obsessing about time;
- Exhibiting fearful behaviour such as being easily startled;
- Expressing a fear of their partner;
- Expressing fears about leaving children with their partner; and
- Being secretive about their home life.

### Signs around a staff member's physical state include:

- Having repeated injuries and/or an explanation for injuries that does not fit the injuries they have;





- Frequent and/or sudden and/or unexpected medical problems and/or sickness absences;
- A change in the way they dress such as excessive clothing in summer, being unkempt or dishevelled;
- A change in the amount of make-up worn;
- Fatigue;
- Sleeping and/or eating disorders;
- Substance use and/or dependence; and
- Depression and/or suicide attempts.

**Other signs that a staff member could be experiencing domestic abuse include:**

- Flowers or gifts sent to them by their partner for no apparent reason;
- Seeming to have less money than previously; and
- Being a victim of vandalism or threats.

This is not an exhaustive checklist and there may be other indications that a staff member is experiencing domestic abuse. It is important to recognise that a change in productivity or behaviour can be as a result of challenging external factors. You should therefore speak with the staff member to determine how best to support them. Having a comprehensive workplace policy on domestic abuse will enable line managers to feel more confident and supported in initiating discussions with staff.



## DEVELOPING A DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

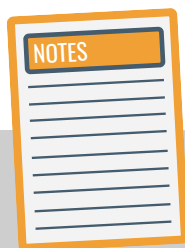
Developing a workplace policy and building capacity in line managers on domestic abuse will allow you to best support the needs of staff and ensure that your business is not adversely affected. Recognising that domestic abuse has a negative impact not just on individual staff members, but also on the work environment, is an important first step in protecting your business.

Implementing a domestic abuse policy will ensure that there is a shared understanding of domestic abuse and of how staff may be supported. There are a number of key areas which your domestic abuse policy should include:

### 1. A definition of domestic abuse

Setting a clear definition will ensure that all staff understand what domestic abuse is and how it can affect the workplace. It is important to set out that while domestic abuse can affect both men and women, their experiences are different. It is also important to be clear that staff experiences of domestic abuse may vary, depending on their age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, whether or not they are disabled, and other characteristics of their background.

In defining domestic abuse, your policy should also include information on the different forms of domestic abuse. While physical violence is commonly identified as domestic abuse, not all abusive relationships involve physical violence. Domestic abuse also encompasses emotional abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse and coercive control.



All forms of domestic abuse can affect women's employment, and therefore have the potential to negatively impact a business.

## 2. The impact of domestic abuse on staff and the workplace

Some staff may think that domestic abuse is not a common problem in society, and where it does exist, it is not relevant to the workplace. Outlining the impact domestic abuse has on victim-survivors and their colleagues clearly illustrates the scope of the problem and why, as an employer, you are committed to challenging it.

Using clear examples and describing the signs of domestic abuse can make employees aware of the possibility that it may be the cause of a number of issues that can arise in the workplace. For example, a suddenly high number of absences without an explanation could be a sign of domestic abuse.

## 3. Staff roles and responsibilities

Your policy should clarify the specific roles and responsibilities for different members of staff including line managers, HR, where applicable, and colleagues.

### Line managers

The responsibility of line managers includes supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse and taking practical steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing. This will also reduce the impact on their team, and the wider business.



## HR team and/or practitioner

If your business has an HR staff member or team, their responsibility should include ensuring the policy is regularly reviewed. It can also include ensuring that other policies are linked to the domestic abuse policy, such as flexible working, absence management, email or internet use, and an employee code of conduct. HR staff should also have a good understanding of how domestic abuse affects staff, and their work performance, and be able to provide advice to line managers on how best to support them.

## Colleagues

Staff may witness an incident of domestic abuse or be brought into situations by perpetrators. If this happens, they should be encouraged to tell their line manager. A colleague may also disclose a personal experience which occurred inside or outside of work. Employees should behave in a supportive manner which can assist their colleague in gaining confidence to report the abuse they may be experiencing.

## 4. Supporting and protecting the safety of staff

Staff affected by domestic abuse often do not disclose to their employer because they are concerned they will not be believed, or that they will not be supported. It is therefore important to make sure that staff feel safe to disclose what is happening in their lives, and when they do, they do not face a negative response.

It is good practice to have clear information on the practical support measures available in the workplace. Your policy should provide a safety planning procedure to ensure a consistent



approach to protecting the safety and wellbeing of staff. If domestic abuse is disclosed, undertaking a risk assessment can mitigate the potential risk to the staff member, and in some cases, their colleagues. It is important to note that each person's needs are different and that any measures should be agreed with the staff member first.

A list of support services and contact details can be found on page 34 and in the **Learn More** section on [www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk](http://www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk)

## 5. Managing a staff member who is perpetrating domestic abuse

Your policy should include a commitment to challenge perpetrators. This approach recognises that abusive and violent behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator. Staff should be aware that misconduct inside and outside of work is viewed seriously and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. In some cases, it could also lead to a criminal investigation.

In some situations, victim-survivors and perpetrators may both be employed by your business. It may be difficult for line managers to know what to do and therefore it is important that this is included in your policy.

It is important that victim-survivors are supported if they disclose their experience and that you prioritise their needs. Health and safety law says that employers have a duty of care to support employees and a key aspect of this is being proactive about dealing with employees who use violent and/or abusive behaviour. It is good practice to conduct a risk assessment with the victim-survivor to identify any risks the perpetrator poses to the victim-survivor and



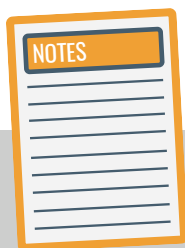
other staff in the workplace. It is important to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use work resources to find out details about their partner or ex-partner, for example a new home address or mobile number.

Additionally, if an employee discloses that they have been abusive to a partner or ex-partner, it is good practice to provide information about the services and support available to them.

**A list of support services and contact details can be found on page 34 and in the [Learn More](http://www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk) section on [www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk](http://www.thinkbusinessthinkequality.org.uk)**

## 6. Protecting confidentiality

Protecting confidentiality when someone discloses domestic abuse is important for ensuring that employee privacy is prioritised, and they are not adversely affected by disclosing. Some staff may want to keep the information private and not share with their colleagues. This may be because of stigmatisation and worry that colleagues will treat them differently. In some cases, protecting confidentiality of victim-survivors is also important in ensuring their safety. If a perpetrator works in the same workplace and finds out their partner has disclosed, it could put the staff member in increased danger. Therefore, it is important for line managers to ensure that information is not shared with other staff members and that staff are aware of their responsibility in relation to confidentiality.



## 7. Record keeping

It's good practice to keep records of any disclosure or report of VAW. It's important that the disclosure or report is clearly recorded and is kept confidential. The records should be neutral and shouldn't include any additional subjective commentary. It's possible that at some point the police may become involved and the record may be used to inform their investigation.

## 8. Understanding how domestic abuse relates to other workplace policies

It is important that your workplace policies recognise the barriers that women face at work, but they should also take into account the workplace experiences of victim-survivors of domestic abuse. Policies such as absence management, health and safety, flexible working, and internet and email use can unintentionally affect victim-survivors when they do not consider their experiences of work.

### Example: Absence management

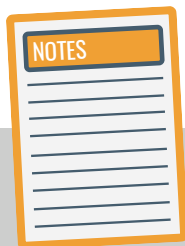
Some businesses use absence management software, which often incorporates the “Bradford Factor” formula that is designed to detect patterns in absences, and triggers when someone has shorter, more frequent absences. The Bradford Factor unintentionally flags victim-survivors, as a pattern of short, frequent absences that can be a sign of domestic abuse. A domestic abuse sensitive absence management policy should recognise this.



## Example: Flexible working

Your flexible working policy should make provisions for safety planning for a staff member experiencing domestic abuse or stalking who is being targeted in or around the workplace. Flexible working can also be an important support mechanism by enabling a change in work patterns, location or workload for victim-survivors who may be experiencing physical or mental health issues.

To find out how your business can benefit from your people working flexibly take the **FLEXIBLE WORKING** test at [www.thinkbusinessstinkequality.org.uk](http://www.thinkbusinessstinkequality.org.uk)





# HOW TO SUPPORT STAFF AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE

Ongoing stigma around domestic abuse means that it may be unlikely that a staff member will disclose their experience. It is more likely that line managers become aware of a situation through noticing a change in the number of absences they have, a change in behaviour or a drop in work performance. Victim-survivors often report that they wish that someone had asked them about it. Therefore, it is important for line managers to understand how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and have conversations with staff.

If a line manager suspects that one of their team is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a conversation to be able to discuss this and identify appropriate support. However, it is important to respect the staff member's decision if they do not want to disclose. There may be cases where line managers try to facilitate conversations and employees choose not to discuss.

## Good practice: Starting a conversation about domestic abuse

When facilitating a conversation, it is important to be supportive and non-judgemental. Questions you can ask include:

- How are you doing at the moment? Is there anything you would like to discuss?
- I've noticed that you're not yourself lately, is everything okay?
- Are there any problems or reasons that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence and why you're missing deadlines?
- Is everything alright at home?
- What support do you think might help?



## What to do when a staff member discloses domestic abuse

It is important for line managers to respond to disclosures in a non-judgemental and sensitive way. There are simple steps that line managers can take:

- Listen to the staff member and take their disclosure seriously;
- Do not be judgemental and make comments about the perpetrator's behaviour, or the staff member's response;
- Do not make comments such as “You were such a lovely couple” or “You seemed so happy together”;
- Reassure them that the business understands how domestic abuse may be affecting their work performance and what can be done to support them;
- Reassure them that their disclosure will be treated confidentially;
- Do not give advice to the staff member – for example, do not pressure them into leaving;
- Provide information about specialist support services, such as the local Women's Aid group;
- Offer practical support such as risk assessment and/or safety planning and flexible working, as far as possible;
- Respect and accept the staff member's thoughts and ideas; and
- Provide ongoing support to ensure their safety and wellbeing is monitored.

## Risk assessment and safety planning

Once a disclosure has been made, you should consider doing a workplace risk assessment with the victim-survivor to ensure that the risk to them and colleagues is minimised. It may also be useful to implement a safety plan. You could consider working with a specialist domestic abuse organisation, such as the local Women's Aid group to develop a workplace



safety plan, where the staff member is happy for this to be done. However, this should always be agreed first with the staff member.

Quick and simple safety measures	
Developing a staff safety plan for getting to and from work. This could include outlining different routes to work, taking the bus or train at different times, changing start and finishing times or using different entrances or exits.	
Diverting phone calls and email messages.	
Changing work patterns or workload.	
Encouraging the staff member to keep records of any incident of abuse in the workplace, including persistent phone calls, emails, or visits to the staff member by their partner/ex-partner.	
Agreeing in advance when and who to contact if the staff member does not come into work, for example, a friend, their family, a neighbour, or the police.	
Ensuring that the staff member does not work alone in isolated areas, wherever possible.	
Issuing instructions to all staff not to reveal the staff member’s personal details to anyone. For example, if a staff member moves to a new house make sure that their new address is not shared with anyone. If the perpetrator works in the same workplace, make sure they cannot access any staff details.	
Moving the staff member out of public view, wherever possible.	



Agreeing with the staff member what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the partner/ex-partner telephones or visits the workplace.	
Alerting reception and security staff if the perpetrator is on work premises without authorisation.	
Have a list of local specialist support services that is easily accessible and signpost to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse such as Women's Aid groups.	

## Ongoing support

Staff affected by domestic abuse will require different types of support depending on their situation. Having a range of practical support you can offer means you are more likely to meet their needs, which in turn will have less of an impact on your business. It is good practice to:

- Signpost staff to specialist domestic abuse support services, such as the local Women's Aid group;
- Make provisions for special leave which may include specific domestic abuse leave (see page 29);
- Provide access to an employee assistance programme; and
- Link into an occupational health service.



## Domestic abuse leave

An increasing number of countries are moving towards providing employees with paid domestic abuse leave of up to ten days. The provision of between five to ten days of domestic abuse leave has recently been introduced in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. South Ayrshire Council became the first local authority in Europe to provide paid domestic abuse leave, while Vodafone also offers up to ten days' paid leave for staff experiencing domestic abuse.

The ability to take time off work without facing disciplinary action or losing out on pay is crucial for victim-survivors who are trying to leave an abusive relationship. Reasons staff would use domestic abuse leave may include taking time off to attend doctor's appointments, solicitor's appointments, appointments to change bank accounts, making arrangement to move schools, moving to a new house or for necessary involvement in police investigations. It is important that along with domestic abuse leave that you also have a domestic abuse policy in place and mechanism that ensure the support and safety of victim-survivors in your workplace.



## BEST PRACTICE CHECKLIST

### Developing a domestic abuse policy

Ensure that your policy includes a definition of domestic abuse.	
Outline the impact of domestic abuse on staff and the workplace.	
Outline staff roles and responsibilities for responding to a disclosure of domestic abuse.	
Provide information on how to support and protect the safety of staff experiencing domestic abuse.	
Detail how you will manage a staff member who is perpetrating domestic abuse.	
Outline how you will protect confidentiality.	
Link domestic abuse to other workplace policies.	
Provide paid domestic abuse leave of between 5-10 days to victim-survivors to pursue counselling, legal appointments and medical appointments.	

### Providing information and raising awareness

Provide line managers and staff with information on the signs of domestic abuse.	
Provide training to line managers on domestic abuse, and how to support a victim-survivor in their team.	



Responding to disclosures	
Conduct a risk assessment to ensure that the risk of domestic abuse to individuals and colleagues is minimised.	
Provide support	
Signpost staff to specialist support services that work on domestic abuse, such as the local Women's Aid group.	
Do a safety plan in line with the staff member's needs.	
Keep in touch with the victim-survivor if they are off on leave or are not in the workplace.	
Identify whether other workplace policies could be used to support a staff member experiencing domestic abuse. This could include identifying whether staff would like to work flexibly, or adjust work hours, workload and/or work location, wherever necessary and possible.	



## GLOSSARY

### **Coercive control**

Coercive control, is a pattern of behaviour that seeks to take away the victim's liberty or freedom, and strip away their sense of self. It is an act or a pattern of acts or behaviour that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. It is used to maintain or regain control of a partner or ex-partner. Coercive control is recognised as a form of psychological abuse in the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018.

### **Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and

other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends).

### **Economic abuse**

Economic abuse incorporates a range of behaviours which allow a perpetrator to control someone else's economic resources or freedoms. It involves restricting access to money and other economic resources which can make it difficult to leave. It can also involve restricting access to essential things such as goods, clothing or transport, and denying the means to improve a person's economic situation.

### **Emotional and psychological abuse**

Emotional and psychological abuse is a form of abuse, characterised by a person subjecting or exposing another person to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. It aims to diminish a victim-survivor's sense of identity, dignity,





self-worth, and independence. Perpetrators use tactics such as threats, verbal abuse, intimidation, bullying, abuse in the workplace, constant criticism and isolating someone from family and friends in order to exert control.

## **Equality**

Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are a woman or a man. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration - recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men.

## **Gender**

Refers to roles, attitudes, values and behaviours that men and women are encouraged to adopt by society. These characteristics can vary depending on the

society around us and can change over time. For example, historically, gender role stereotyping would suggest that women should look after children at home while men go to work in the formal labour market.

## **Stalking**

Stalking is persistent and unwanted behaviour which causes or has the intention to cause fear or alarm. It is a form of surveillance underpinned by the communication of that surveillance.

## **Victim-survivor**

The term victim-survivor is used to capture that individuals experiencing domestic abuse can be both victim and survivor. Victims are often portrayed as helpless, powerless or passive in contrast to survivors who are active, heroic and resourceful. However, the terms used separately do not capture the experience of domestic abuse or the external factors that affect women's ability to leave.



## **Perpetrator**

An individual who chooses to use abusive behaviours in order to assert power and control, usually to gain authority over their partner. Someone who is currently or has previously committed domestic abuse or stalking.

## **LIST OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN SCOTLAND**

### **Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre**

Culturally sensitive signposting and support service for Muslim and ethnic minority women.

Helpline from Mon-Fri 10am-4pm:

0808 801 0301

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

### **Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline**

Support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them.

24hr service: 0800 027 1234

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

### **Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid**

Support to Asian, Black and minority ethnic women, children and young people.

Helpline (24hrs): 0141 353 0859

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



### **LGBT Helpline Scotland**

Information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Helpline: 0300 123 2523

### **Rape Crisis Scotland**

Scotland's national rape crisis organisation providing helpline and email support for anyone affected by sexual violence.

Helpline from 6pm-midnight:

08088 010 302

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

### **Scottish Women's Aid**

Scotland's lead domestic abuse organisation working towards preventing domestic abuse and supporting victim-survivors.

[www.womensaid.scot](http://www.womensaid.scot)

### **Scottish Women's Rights Centre**

Free legal information and advice for women experiencing gender-based violence.

Freephone: 08088 010 789

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

### **Shakti Women's Aid**

Support and information for Black and minority ethnic women, children and young people experiencing or who have experienced domestic abuse.

0131 475 2399

[www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk](http://www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk)



Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and employees to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

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Close the Gap

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