

# Work Place Policy Guidance in relation to Domestic Abuse & Violence



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This guidance is designed to enable employers to develop a domestic abuse work place policy and provides practical tips for managers on how to manage and support an employee suffering from domestic abuse.



# Foreword

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We are pleased to support this guidance for employers on how to respond if an employee is affected by domestic abuse.

This guidance is designed to enable employers to develop a domestic abuse work place policy and provides practical tips for managers on how to manage and support an employee suffering from domestic abuse.

This guidance makes clear, that there are simple steps employers can take to respond to this sensitive issue.

To a large degree this is about basic good people management involving managers, listening, empathizing and showing concern for employees.

However it is important that managers are aware of the warning signs that might suggest a member of staff may be suffering from abuse, as well as the sources of support available to victims.



*Donna Hall*

Donna Hall

**CEO for Wigan Council**

*Trish Anderson*

Trish Anderson

**CEO for Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group**



# Introduction

A steady income is often essential to a survivor's economic independence and opportunities to escape domestic abuse and sexual violence against women and young girls.

Domestic abuse not only impacts on the well being of women\*, but it affects the financial strength and success of the companies for which they work.

Seventy five per cent of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work and it is often possible for perpetrators to use workplace resources such as phones, email and other means to threaten, intimidate or abuse their current or former partner. So it's particularly important that employers are aware of the steps needed to support their staff.

The aim is that every employer within the Borough of Wigan benefits from taking effective action in the workplace to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and that your staff feels safe and supported at work.

New laws from January 2016 make it illegal to inflict emotional/psychological abuse. Coercive control can cause psychological damage to victims; coercive control can be tantamount to torture. This new legislation will mean police will have the power to investigate the totality of behaviour. It should increase victims' confidence in the system and lead to more successful prosecutions

This guidance includes low cost, common sense practical tips through to steps on developing an effective domestic abuse workplace policy.

It's an ambitious aim but one that we can achieve together and help to save lives if we all take some small steps in the same direction.

Doing nothing is not really an option, if we are to challenge misconceptions and beliefs and encourage victims to come forward, then everybody needs to play their part in supporting and fostering healthy relationships both in and outside the workplace.

*\*Whilst this guidance refers principally to women, it applies equally to men. Research shows that women are more likely to suffer more serious injury and on going assaults than men. However, it should be acknowledged that men can experience domestic abuse from their female partner and that domestic abuse can also occur in same sex relationships.*



# Why is action needed in the work place?

Guidance, developed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the chartered Institute of Personnel and Development is incorporated throughout this document and is intended to outline how employers should respond if an employee is affected by Domestic Abuse. Supporting staff that have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse makes business sense. Not only will this be a reflection of good management practice but also corporate social responsibility.

Statistics show that:

- Domestic abuse currently costs UK businesses over £1.9 billion a year
- In the UK, in any one year, more than 20% of employed women take time off work because of domestic violence, and 2% lose their jobs as a direct result of the abuse
- 75% of women that experience domestic abuse are targeted at work – from harassing phone calls and abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced, to physical assaults

This document is designed to enable employers to develop a domestic abuse workplace policy and provides tips for managers on how to manage and support an employee experiencing domestic abuse. These small steps can include:

- Giving an employee time off to consult a solicitor
- Diverting telephone Calls
- Providing a safe car park space
- Changing working patterns to allow staff to start earlier or later or leave work earlier or later.

Having a domestic abuse work place policy can clearly demonstrate domestic abuse is not tolerated within or outside the work place. It will show a commitment to provide support for staff and take action against perpetrators.

Domestic abuse is a subject that some managers struggle to respond to appropriately. Employees that experience domestic abuse can be subject to disciplinary action and even lose their jobs because their behavior e.g. being late or sudden bouts of sickness can be misinterpreted, this can also lead to increased employee turnover, which is not good for business.

For some employees the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety. A domestic abuse work place policy will mean that skilled and experienced staff are able to retain their jobs and feel safe and supported within the workplace and thus increasing their commitment to you as an employer.

**For more information on tips to plan an awareness campaign visit The Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls**

**[www.endvawnow.org](http://www.endvawnow.org)**



# A Duty of Care

Under the Human Rights Act all public bodies have an obligation to protect the human rights of individuals and to ensure that their human rights are not being violated. Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence denies women and girls the most fundamental of human rights. Implementing a workplace policy can help organisations meet their human rights duties in relation to incidents of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Failing to tackle this could lead to an infringement of the Human Rights Act.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a public sector duty and those subject to the general equality must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity for protected groups and foster good relations.

Health and safety laws ensure workers have the right to work in a safe environment where risk to health and wellbeing are considered and dealt with effectively.

There are four main areas of health and safety law relevant to violence at work;

1. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
2. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
3. The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995

4. The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996

An effective work place policy on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can ensure that employers are complying with these laws.

## Practical tips for Businesses

Even with limited resources there are steps that small business owners can take to address the effects of domestic abuse in the work place. In many cases it is about being aware and sign posting to the organisations that provide specialist support

Below is a list of low cost, common-sense actions businesses can take to manage domestic abuse in the work place, with benefits for both employees and businesses.

## Recognise the problem

- Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/ or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record.
- Look for changes in the way an employee dresses i.e. excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make up worn



# Response

## Believe

Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse – do not ask for proof. Managers should ask the employee indirect and open questions to help establish a relationship with the employee and develop empathy.

### Some examples of questions that could be used

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
- I have noticed recently that you are not yourself, if anything the matter?
- Are there any problems or reason that may be contributing to your frequent sickness absence/under performance at work?
- Is everything alright at home?
- Has anyone at home ever threatened or hurt you?
- What support do you think might help?
- What would YOU like to happen? How?

Reassure the employee that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and the support that can be offered.

## Provide Support

- Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex / partner telephones or visits the workplace
- Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area and check that staff have arrangements for getting safely to and from home
- Keep a record of any incidents of abuse on the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the work place
- Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors

## Refer to appropriate help agencies

Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisation's that deal with domestic abuse (see page 9 for further details). You could also encourage male employees to pledge their support to the White Ribbon Campaign which promotes anti violence and abuse towards women and girls and support the annual campaign.

**“ Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse. Do not ask for proof. ”**



# Developing a work place policy

Here are examples on the types of information that should be included in a work place Domestic Abuse Policy.

- It is important that all organisation's develop their own policy to reflect the needs of their employees; however it is helpful at the start of the policy to have a Company Statement which opposes all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- It should also have a clear definition of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is helpful to set out what is meant by domestic abuse and sexual violence as this will help to ensure a shared understanding.
- The policy should clarify responsibilities and specific roles of managers which should encourage the disclosure and discussion of abuse in a safe, sympathetic and non judgemental environment. This will assist in recording details of incidents in the workplace. Managers should respect the employee's privacy and while the reporting of domestic abuse is encouraged, it cannot be enforced.
- It is important to link the Domestic Abuse Policy to existing Human Resource policies as this can allow individuals to change working patterns. Special leave may also help to facilitate any practical arrangements in terms of attending court or meeting with Solicitors.
- Demonstrating a commitment to challenge perpetrators by making employees aware that misconduct inside and outside of work is viewed seriously and can lead to disciplinary actions being taken. Employees should be aware that violence against women, abuse and sexual violence is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. However it may also be appropriate to support an employee who is seeking to help to address their behaviour.
- Confidentiality and Right to Privacy – As far as possible information should only be shared on a need to know basis in order to achieve the best outcome for the employee. Where possible this should be done with the employees' permission. Managers are responsible for ensuring information is not disclosed and that all employees are aware of their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality.
- Clear information on practical and supportive measures in the work place, e.g. safety measures, work place security, work location, including the review of duties as well as provision for leave and time off work should be included in the policy in accordance with your own organisation's Human Resources policies.



- The Policy needs to include a commitment to provide training to all staff on the implications of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in the work place – this will ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and the support it offers. The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself or offer personal advice, but to make it clear through a workplace policy that employees will be supported throughout and to outline what help is available.

- Including a list of local and national support and advice agency contacts will help managers and staff experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence the opportunity to access vital advice on financial, health and housing issues as well as legal assistance – see below:

## List of Useful Contacts

Organisation	Support and advice	Contact details
<b>Wigan Council and partners</b>		
<b>Greater Manchester Police</b>	Emergencies	Tel: 999
	Non-emergencies	Tel: 101
	Public Protection Unit - Provides a range of help & information to people who are experiencing domestic abuse.	Tel: 0161 856 7041 / 7955 (Mon to Sun 7am to 8pm)
<b>End the Fear</b>	Website & helpline support for anybody who is experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence.	Tel: 0161 636 7525 <a href="http://www.endthefear.co.uk">www.endthefear.co.uk</a>
<b>Adult Services Initial Assessment Team</b>	Support for vulnerable adults.	Tel: 01942 828777
<b>Children &amp; Young People's Duty Team</b>	Support for vulnerable children.	Tel: 01942 828300
<b>Emergency Out Of Hours Duty Team</b>	Emergency support for vulnerable children and adults.	Tel: 01942 489011

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Support and advice</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
<b>Council Tax &amp; Housing Benefit</b>	Enquiries about claiming council tax and housing benefits.	Tel: 01942 828644 Email: <a href="mailto:benefits@wigan.gov.uk">benefits@wigan.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.wigan.gov.uk">www.wigan.gov.uk</a>
<b>Council Tenancy Enquiries</b>	Contact Centre for housing advice.	Tel: 01942 489005
	Housing Options Officer – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm – advice and support in cases of domestic abuse	Tel: 0161 856 7421
	Out of hours for emergency situations.	Tel: 01942 828777
<b>Local organisations</b>		
<b>DIAS (drop in and share)</b>	Free confidential service providing counselling, support, advice and assistance to anyone who has experienced or been affected by domestic abuse.	Tel: 01942 495230 (24 hr answer phone with ring back) Email: <a href="mailto:diasdvc@aol.com">diasdvc@aol.com</a>
<b>Victim Care Unit</b>	National charity giving free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family and friends	Tel: 0300 303 0162 <a href="http://www.victimsupport.org.uk">www.victimsupport.org.uk</a>
<b>Citizen’s Advice Bureau</b> Appointments can be made available for afternoon, evening and Saturday mornings	Offers advice and support to families tipped into crisis. Drop in for Wigan Office 9am to 12.30	Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan WN11NH. Tel: 0300 330 1153 <a href="http://www.wigancab.org.uk">www.wigancab.org.uk</a>
	Drop in for Leigh Office 9am to 11am	6 The Avenue, Leigh WN7 1 ES
<b>Manchester Rape Crisis</b>	Provides crucial support and long term specialised counselling support for all women and girls of all ages. Open Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm	The Pankhurst Centre, 60 Nelson Street, Manchester M13 9WP Tel: 0161 273 4500 <a href="http://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk">www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk</a>

Organisation	Support and advice	Contact details
<b>National contacts</b>		
<b>Women's Aid</b>	Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children	24hr helpline Tel: 0808 2000 247 <a href="http://www.womensaid.org.uk">www.womensaid.org.uk</a>
<b>Samaritans</b>	Aims to benefit society by improving people's emotional health in order to create a greater sense of well being.	Freephone 116 123 Email: <a href="mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk">jo@samaritans.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a>
<b>MALE Men's Advice Line – for men experiencing domestic violence</b>	Emotional support, practical advice and information on specialist services including legal, housing, child contact, mental health	Tel: 0808 801 0327 <a href="http://www.mensadvice.org.uk">www.mensadvice.org.uk</a>
<b>Respect Phonenumber</b>	Information for perpetrators of abuse; people who have been abused; and professionals seeking specialist advice.	Tel: 0808 802 4040 <a href="http://www.respectphonenumber.org.uk">www.respectphonenumber.org.uk</a>
<b>Galop</b>	Offering advice, support and referral services to LGBT people experiencing homophobic, transphobic and same sex domestic violence.	Tel: 0207 704 2040 <a href="http://www.galop.org.uk">www.galop.org.uk</a>
<b>Survivors UK (sexual violence)</b>	Online support	<a href="http://www.survivorsuk.org">www.survivorsuk.org</a>
<b>Forced Marriage helpline</b>	Confidential support & advice	Tel: 020 7008 0151
<b>Rape Crisis England &amp; Wales</b>	A National Charity and the umbrella body for a network of independent members of Rape Crisis Centres.	Tel: 0808 802 9999 <a href="http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk">www.rapecrisis.org.uk</a>

Organisation	Support and advice	Contact details
<b>National contacts ... continued</b>		
<b>NSPCC Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Helpline</b>	FGM is a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents. A free anonymous 24hr help line – call if you are worried a child is at risk of or has had FGM.	Tel: 0800 028 3550 Email: <a href="mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk">fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk</a>
<b>White Ribbon Campaign</b>	A national website where men can pledge their support to actively challenge male violence and abuse against women and girls	<a href="http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk">www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk</a>

