

Domestic abuse and the role of employers

Domestic abuse is a cruel and often complex crime that can affect anyone. Victims are left with physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. Far too many individuals have their lives severely affected by abuse.

The office of national statistics report that the Crime Survey for England and Wales during year ending March 2020, estimated that 5.5% of adults aged 16 to 74 years (2.3 million) experienced domestic abuse.*

The government have committed to transforming the response to domestic abuse including the revised Domestic Abuse Bill.

The prevention of abuse and the protection of victims lies at the heart of the Bill.

The measures in the Bill seek to:

- promote awareness
- protect and support victims – by introducing a new domestic abuse protection notice and order
- transform the justice response – including helping victims to give their evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser
- improve performance – the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will aim to drive consistency and improved performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies



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experienced domestic abuse in 2020**

* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2020>

But what does all this mean for employers?

Public Health England (2018) report that one in four women and one in six men suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime* and when you consider that one third of an adult's working life is spent in work, employers are in a unique and influential position to create a supportive workplace culture, that not only encourages the identification of health and wellbeing needs, but also helps break the silence around this issue.

Whilst the human cost is immeasurable, the business cost implications of domestic abuse is estimated at almost £2 billion a year.* This is due to decreased productivity, lost wages, time off work and sick pay. Employers therefore have both a business reason and duty of care to provide a safe work environment for their staff.

Part of the government's strategy in tackling this issue is a toolkit, that has been developed in consultation with employers, and by 'Business in the Community', in association with Public Health England. The aim of this toolkit is to help employers spot the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse, which include:

- frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early
- reduced productivity of work
- changes in the way an employee communicates – this could be the employee making a lot of personal calls or texts, or a negative reaction to personal calls
- physical signs such as unexplained or frequent bruises or other injuries

With businesses continuing to facilitate home working and supporting the 'stay at home' regime, there has never been a more important time for employers to be aware of the impact of domestic abuse and the important role that they have in supporting their employees.

Domestic abuse can take many forms, but it is basically the abuse of power and control over one person by another. Abuse can be psychological, verbal, emotional, physical, economic, or sexual.



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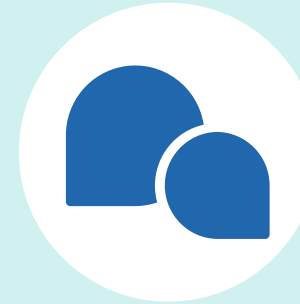
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-help-employers-deal-with-domestic-abuse-and-stigma>

The domestic abuse toolkit for employers' (bitc-wellbeing-toolkit-domesticabuse-dec2019.pdf) detail **three key actions** that employers can take, these are.



01 Acknowledge

This is about employers being aware and proactive. It's not always easy to detect when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse. Abuse is more than often associated with physical violence, but it can also be emotional or psychological. The more supportive the atmosphere that an employer can create, the more likely employees will feel comfortable disclosing a problem with domestic abuse.



02 Respond

An effective and proactive workplace policy and or guidance is critical to raise awareness, to identify responsibilities and to facilitate support. Developing a policy/ guidance will help promote a safer culture where employees feel able to disclose any issues of domestic abuse, with the reassurance that appropriate support will be provided.



03 Refer

There is a wealth of resources available for employers to use and to share with employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse. Some of these are detailed on the next page.



References and support

New advice to help employers deal with domestic abuse and stigma

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-help-employers-deal-with-domestic-abuse-and-stigma>

Domestic Abuse Toolkit – Guide for Employers

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/domestic-abuse-toolkit/bitc-wellbeing-toolkit-domesticabuse-dec2018.pdf>

Bright Sky UK Directory of services

[Bright Sky UK \(bright-sky.org.uk\)](http://BrightSkyUK.org.uk)

ManKind: advice and support for men experiencing domestic abuse

www.mankind.org.uk/help-for-victims

Domestic abuse: workplace policies and managing and supporting employees

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

Domestic violence resource manual for employers, developed in partnership by Refuge and Respect

[Respect_Refuge_DV_Manual_A4_76pp.pdf \(safeineastsussex.org.uk\)](https://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/Respect_Refuge_DV_Manual_A4_76pp.pdf)

