

END DOMESTIC ABUSE

BUSINESS CASE



Chive

Why should you be concerned as an employer?

1 To create a culture of trust and transparency with your employees
For an employee to tell their manager that they are experiencing domestic abuse might seem like the end of their career.

2 To prevent drops in productivity and presenteeism
Of the £14 billion that the UK loses in economic output due to domestic abuse, £1.3 billion per year is absorbed by employers⁸.

3 To raise awareness and dispel myths of who experiences abuse
Domestic abuse really can affect anyone; even those who appear to have it all.

Gender Equality and Eliminating Domestic Abuse

A corporate policy addressing domestic abuse and the impact it has on your workforce will complement initiatives addressing gender equality.

UN Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. An important part of that is tackling the financial, emotional, physical and sexual abuse experienced by women and men in their own homes. Sadly, it is women who disproportionately suffer from domestic abuse, especially in developing countries, but men do also experience abuse. Furthermore, the stereotype of the aggressive male abuser also dehumanises and demonises men.

Silence or brushing it under the carpet is no longer an option.

We need proactive approaches that focus on prevention and early-stage intervention thus reducing the cases that reach crisis-point.

We need a concerted effort from individuals, communities, businesses, policy-makers and governments to educate themselves and engage with the campaign to eliminate domestic violence. Gender equality is a winner for everyone and hopefully this document shows that **the work to eliminate domestic violence is a crucial part of achieving equality for all.**

“Violence against women and girls is rooted in centuries of male domination. All of this must change... now.”

UN Secretary General, António Guterres



Definition of Domestic Abuse

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

”

Domestic Abuse: A Complex Issue

emotional & psychological	financial	physical	sexual
<p>Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth or self-esteem, this may well impact the mind and mental health.⁹</p>	<p>Subtle or overt attempts to limit the partner's access to assets or conceal information and accessibility to personal finances.¹⁰</p>	<p>Violent assault which may result in injury.¹¹</p>	<p>Any situation in which an individual is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity.¹²</p>
<p>When someone constantly puts you down or criticises you, threatens to stop you from seeing your children, or threatens to commit suicide if you leave the relationship.</p>	<p>When your partner or another family member takes control of your financial affairs when you don't want them to, or prevents you from having access to money.</p>	<p>When someone harms you by hitting, pushing, throwing objects or driving dangerously. This also includes threats to harm you, other people or pets.</p>	<p>When your partner makes you do sexual things that you haven't given consent for. You may not be capable of giving consent, for instance because you are too young, drunk or high on drugs. Consent cannot be given by omission.</p>

These definitions and examples are by no means an exhaustive list; abuse can take many forms.
For more information please visit our partner charity standtall.org



£14 Billion

the lost economic output each year in the UK¹

The UK Home Office published research calculating this figure, which comprises time lost at work as a result of domestic abuse and reduced productivity at work as a result of physical and emotional injuries. Domestic abuse affects the bottom line. Employees experiencing abuse at home are unlikely to feel comfortable telling their line managers or HR. **However, it will impact their work.**

For instance, an employee may display reduced confidence, energy, productivity, attention and focus, They may require time off to recover from domestic disputes leading to disruption to the wider team dynamics.

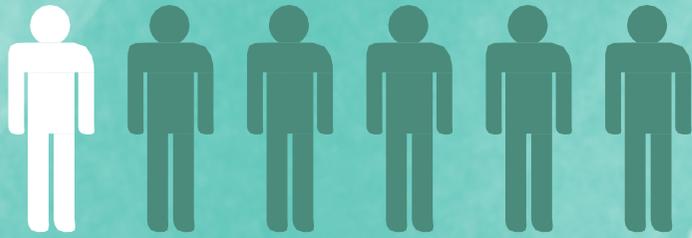
Domestic abuse equates to loss of output. Long term sickness relating to the consequences of abuse on mental and physical health leads to loss of resource and costs the company in the form of statutory sick pay and loss of output. Sustained over a long period of time, this can cause people to lose their jobs or miss promotions which means the company loses talent.

Corporate organisations should recognise that **domestic abuse happens and will impact the workplace.**

We propose upskilling through educational training and **putting a policy in place** so that employers can show they are aware of the issue and have the capacity to support people in their organisation who are experiencing or recovering from abuse.



1 in 4 women²



**and 1 in 6 men³
will experience
domestic abuse
in their lifetime**

Employers have an opportunity to ensure a message of 'zero tolerance' regarding domestic abuse. The welfare of staff is nearly always one of the top priorities for leaders in an organisation.

33%

of all domestic abuse murders take place on workplace grounds⁴

75%

of victims received abuse from their perpetrator whilst at work⁵

68%

of domestic abuse victims are more likely to experience depression⁶

These experiences have a significant impact on employees and workplaces.

54%

of employers said that domestic abuse caused the quality of an employee's work to suffer⁷

56%

of employers said domestic abuse led to absenteeism⁸

58%

of abused women miss at least 3 days of work a month⁹

Thrive can assist you in openly addressing domestic abuse, proactively managing the impact at work and supporting a colleague's recovery, both personally and professionally.

"I started working for an independent language school as the Centre Manager on a rolling contract. [My partner] was extremely jealous to the point of absurdity and would **make me drive to his work at lunchtime as he didn't want me to spend the time with my only colleague, who was a man. One time, he noticed the top button of my shirt was undone and asked if I had shagged my colleague during lunch. There was an evening where he became so convinced that I was lying to him that he started to strangle me.** I thought he was deeply troubled, that only I could fix him and by accepting his apology, I was showing him how much I loved him."

"The physical violence increased tenfold. He regularly **hit me in the face and all over my body. He pushed me, choked me, kicked me and spat at me. He broke my toe and perforated my eardrum.** After he was violent, he often forced me to have sex with him to make things 'ok' again."

"To cover my bruises I borrowed a **long-sleeved uniform** from a colleague and wore **heavy make-up**. If I couldn't cover it up, **I took sick days which resulted in disciplinary meetings.**"

"**Leaving was one of the hardest things I have done,** but over the last three and a half years I have restarted my life. I have an amazing job at a pharmaceutical company, have made new friends, sorted out the divorce, reconnected with my family and met a loving and respectful man who is also my best friend. I suffered from panic attacks, PTSD, nightmares, spent ten months on antidepressants and still can't watch anything violent on TV. I have been having EMDR treatment for trauma and sought counselling. **I have, through all of this, claimed my life back: I feel unstoppable now.**"

Domestic abuse survivor

Employers' Duty of Care

“

I didn't realise it was our problem, too. I thought if it was a domestic problem, it was none of our business. I learned domestic abuse follows the victim to work.

HR manager

”

Employers have a duty of care to ensure workers are operating in a safe environment where risks to health and well-being are considered and dealt with efficiently.

There are simple steps that can be taken to respond to this sensitive issue. For instance, establishing a policy, creating clear procedures, sharing resources and insisting on a zero-tolerance culture is not only good business but it would save a life.

Facilitating conversations, providing tips for managers on how to support an employee and putting appropriate signposts in place could make a huge difference.

While 86% of HR leaders agree that employers have a duty of care for employees experiencing domestic abuse, only 5% of organisations have specific policies or guidelines on the issue.¹⁰

Thrive can assist your organisation to...

understand domestic abuse and the risks and consequences in the workplace

fully support colleagues which may include practical measures such as diverting calls and alerting reception

engage with local Community Safety Partnerships and specialist charities

encourage sympathetic, non-judgemental and confidential conversations

review and update other policies, procedures and practices that are linked

establish the responsibility of managers to encourage the disclosure, facilitate discussion, identify appropriate support and record incidents that occur at work

appoint domestic abuse advocates

provide training on the implications of abuse in the workplace

disseminate information about the organisation's initiatives as well as local and national support and advice lines

Take Action Today: 10 Practical Tips



Recognise the problem

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



Respond

3. Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse - do not ask for proof.
4. Reassure the employee that the organisation has an understanding of how domestic abuse may affect their work performance and support that can be offered.



Provide support

5. Divert phone calls and email messages and look to change a phone extension if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
6. Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if their ex/partner telephones or visits the workplace.
7. 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.
8. Keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace.



Refer to the appropriate help

9. Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors (Refuge / Respect 2010).
10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible and refer employees to appropriate organisations that deal with domestic abuse.



“ During my abusive relationship, I had two jobs in which both employers saw that my energy decreased. I lacked focus and was unable to concentrate. This resulted in disciplinary meetings. In one of the jobs, my contract was not renewed. I was afraid to talk about it at work and also terrified of disclosing anything in case my partner found out. Now I am three years into my recovery and love my current job. My new employer has supported me through the counselling and has been understanding when I've been struggling to cope. Gaining confidence through my new job is an important part of the process of claiming my life back. ”

*Survivor of
domestic abuse*

Assets:

- Domestic Violence resource manual for employers by Refuge
- Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse by the Department for Health and SafeLives
- The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence Research Outcomes
- 'Domestic violence resource manual for employers', 2nd ed., Refuge

References:

1. UK Home Office: <https://bit.ly/2S3E2hk>, 2019, p.12.
2. Office for National Statistics, November 2019.
3. Office for National Statistics, November 2019.
4. i-Croner: <https://bit.ly/3eMt3Tq>, 2015.
5. Thecorporatealliance.co.uk
6. Thecorporatealliance.co.uk
7. Domestic Violence and Abuse: Working together to transform responses in the workplace', Durham University for The Vodafone Foundation, 2018
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

For more information and to discuss taking the next steps towards ending domestic abuse please email Jemima Lovatt at [**hello@thrivefuture.org**](mailto:hello@thrivefuture.org)