



# Spotting the Signs

Supporting employees affected by Domestic Abuse



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## 01. Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse is defined by the Home Office as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or who have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Domestic abuse covers a range of areas such as emotional, physical, financial, sexual or physical abuse and may include a range of behaviours, such as (this list is not exhaustive) hitting, biting, burning, rape, verbal threats, physical threats, being watched, being constantly blamed, having wages or pensions taken away, and indecent phone calls.

Both men and women can be victims of domestic abuse. Abuse can be within same-sex relationships or affect those who have a 'protected characteristic', which can lead to additional safeguarding needs and responses. Victims of domestic abuse are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

The purpose of this guide is to offer practical support for managers when a member of their staff has been identified as a victim of domestic abuse. This should include confidentiality being afforded to them in their workplace, unless there are safeguarding measures involving colleagues, which necessitates wider information sharing to prevent risk and harm. It should be recognised that as a manager you cannot solve the problem, but can offer support and take all reasonable action to ensure the workplace is safe and secure for the individual and others who may be at risk.

When a person is experiencing domestic abuse, it will have a knock on effect in other areas of their lives, it is not an isolated incident. Some of the signs and indicators that a person may be experiencing domestic abuse are unexplained injuries or injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation, decreased productivity or poor performance, frequent lateness or absences, changes in behaviour, an incident in the workplace, tiredness, constant checking of phones or answering calls from the same person.

These types of issues could often lead to disciplinary procedures, therefore it is important to find out the reason as to why the individual is presenting these issues. Acting on disciplinary procedures before knowing the full picture could put the person at more risk of abuse.

You may become aware of a domestic abuse situation through sudden changes in behaviour or performance, absence monitoring, poor performance or an incident in the workplace. Some victims will work longer hours to avoid going home and may put in additional effort because they are desperate not to lose their job. Identifying an individual who is experiencing difficulties at an early stage can help to ensure appropriate support is provided. This can enable the individual to deal with their situation more effectively.

You must adopt a sensitive, empathic and non-judgemental approach when dealing with an individual who is experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

There are many complex reasons as to why a person doesn't seek help or leave an abusive relationship. These complex reasons extend to why a person might not disclose to their line manager that they are in an abusive relationship. Instead they may try to deal with it by themselves which in turn would have a negative impact on their work performance.

Some of the reasons as to why an individual may not speak to their manager are:

- Fear of losing their job
- Fear of their colleagues finding out
- Fear of being judged
- Fear of being penalised by their employer
- Fear of their partner/the abuser
- Fear of not being believed.

## 02. Key definitions

### Coercive behaviour

This is defined as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim. This definition includes 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

### Controlling behaviour

This is defined as 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.

### Domestic violence and abuse

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

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional.

### Stalking and harassment

This is repeated behaviour which is unwanted by the victim and causes the victim alarm or distress. It encompasses a wide range of behaviour and can include frequent, unwanted contact; following or watching the victim; damage to the victims property, and threats of harm.

## 03. Your role as a line manager

The types of behaviours or skills that you will need when dealing with a domestic abuse concern include:

- Making yourself approachable to the individual
- Providing an understanding and supportive environment for the individual to discuss their needs with you
- Ensuring any discussions about the individual's situation take place in private
- Ensuring the individual's confidentiality is respected as far as possible
- Listening to the individual and being non-judgemental
- Understanding that the individual may not wish to approach you and may prefer to seek support from a colleague, staff association, staff support group, union or HR. If the individual does not wish to speak to you, you should advise them of the difficulties that may arise if you are not aware of the relevant facts, for instance if there is a potential health and safety issue or if other action is being taken such as performance or absence monitoring.
- Asking the individual what support measures they may wish to explore.

Other points that you will need to consider include:

- Explaining the options available to support the individual, which may include referral to an outside agency where the individual agrees to this action
- Providing details of Health and Wellbeing services and other external support organisations
- Being aware there may be additional issues faced by the individual because of a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation
- Know the details of your local Vulnerable Victim Advocate (VVA) or Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA).

## 04. Confidentiality

Consent from the individual should normally be obtained before information is sought or passed on.

There may be circumstances when information must be shared without the individual's consent. For example, where there is significant concern for the individual's safety, or concern that another adult or child is, or is likely to, suffer significant harm.

The dangers associated with breaches of confidentiality in domestic and sexual violence cases can be extreme.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse have been known to go to great lengths to obtain information on the whereabouts and movements of an ex-partner.

Be mindful that the perpetrator may try to contact the victim through their place of work. You may wish to consider screening any calls or having a process in place for others to report anything suspicious.

## 05.

## How an individual can report domestic abuse

An individual who is the subject of domestic abuse is encouraged to raise such concerns at the earliest opportunity using one of the following options:

- Informing you (as the line manager)
- Informing a third party (for example second line manager, colleague)
- Contacting any available employee support services
- Contacting the police:
  - 101 or 999 if in immediate danger
- Public Protection Unit (Mon – Fri 8am – 4pm) **020 7601 2941**
- City of London Police Control Room **020 7601 2222** or online at **www.cityoflondon.police.uk**
- Vulnerable Victim Advocate – **020 7601 2968** or **07944 634946**
- Contact a domestic abuse support service (see page 11)

If an individual believes that a colleague may be experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse, they should report their concerns to you as the individual's line manager.

While a robust approach is taken in respect of perpetration of abuse, individuals who recognise the impact of their behaviour should be encouraged to seek help and support to address their behaviour.

Do not force a person to report the matter to the police. Offer support and guidance to help them. This decision should only be taken out of their hands if they are in immediate danger.



## 06. How to respond to a domestic abuse concern

If an individual discloses to you, or if you or one of the individual's colleagues believe that they are experiencing domestic abuse, you should:

- Meet with the individual (if they wish to) to discuss the matter sensitively and confidentially. You will need to familiarise yourself with this support guide in order to ensure the correct support and advice is offered.
- Be sensitive, provide confidentiality, be non-judgemental, supportive and discrete
- Prioritise the individual's safety over work efficiency
- Make sure appropriate support is in place, especially if the individual is absent from work, for example on maternity leave or sickness absence
- Consider making a safety plan with the individual to ensure that there is appropriate support in place
- Allocate time and space to listen to the individual
- Make sure that they know that their managers door is always open
- DO NOT force the individual to report the abuse to the police. This has to be a choice they make themselves. The police should only be contacted if somebody is at immediate risk of harm.
- Contact a specialist domestic abuse service for advice and to signpost the individual

Under no circumstances should you conduct or suggest mediation between the victim and perpetrator. Do not contact the abuser. This could put the individual and the employer at risk. This should be left to professionals (i.e. the police/social services)

## 07. Ensuring the safety of the individual

The individual's safety must be considered as the highest priority. This should include the risks posed to the individual regarding their workplace/role and other factors to assess if adjustments are required. Make sure a safety plan is put in place. The VVA/PPU can be contacted to offer advice and support with this.

Examples of changes that could help to ensure the individual's safety include:

- Screening/diverting phone calls and email messages
- Providing an alternative phone extension or email address if the individual is receiving harassing calls/ emails
- Agreeing with the individual what information to share with colleagues and how they should respond if the individual's partner or ex-partner telephones or visits the workplace. This is particularly relevant to personal details or the individual's whereabouts to anyone, including family members.
- Ensuring the individual does not work alone or in an isolated area
- Supporting alternative arrangements for the individual to travel safely to and from home/ work

- Changing the locks/codes to enter the workplace
- Providing a personal or workstation alarm
- Providing an alternative entrance to, or exit from, the workplace
- Screening access to the workplace
- Enabling reception/security to identify the perpetrator (photo, car registration), and advising them on what to do if the perpetrator arrives at the workplace
- Reviewing the security of all personnel records and personal information
- Have a group of colleagues walk with the person to / from their car or transportation means have an agreement in place that, if the individual has an unscheduled absence from work, then you have an agreed contact method to ensure safety.

## 08. Advice when employees are working from home

Since Covid-19, there has been an increase in the number of employees working from home. As organisations adapt and change the way they are working, for some people working from home will become more permanent. This can present increased risk and issues for individuals in abusive relationships. The workplace is a place of safety and an opportunity for the individual to seek support and advice, whilst not attending the office on a regular basis these opportunities are missed. If the individual lives with the perpetrator, working from home would mean they have less time to speak about the abuse in a confidential space. The individual might be spending more time with the perpetrator which could increase the level of abuse through further control, isolation, violence, threats etc. There are ways in which employers, managers and colleagues can support an individual in this situation. How an employer can support an employee when remote working:

- Check in regularly with the individual- have regular video calls so you can visibly see them.
- Book in weekly appointments so these virtual catch ups are in the diary.
- Make sure you check that it is safe to talk about the abuse. Remember that the individual may live with the perpetrator.
- Have a safe word with the individual in case it is not safe to talk, or if a conversation needs to stop suddenly (if the perpetrator could hear the conversation).
- Confidentiality- ensure the individual's details are only accessible to their manager and one person in HR. When the individual does not live with the perpetrator, the perpetrator might try and gain information on the individual especially if they know they are working from home.
- Consider any adjustments for a remote workplace which are necessary to address safeguarding concerns identified. Such as: Signpost to the local police to enhance security on their property, check if the perpetrator has access to the individual's laptop- be mindful when emailing information relating to domestic abuse that they may see this, ask the individual what the organisation can do to address their safety concerns.
- Look out for unusual/changes in behaviour. Physical injuries visible on camera, strange clothing for the weather (for example a roll neck jumper in summer to hide injuries), disengagement with visual meetings, tiredness, decrease in productivity, lack of engagement in social activities.
- If you notice any of these changes, ask the individual if everything is ok, checking beforehand that they are in a private space and able to talk.

- Put information about domestic abuse support services on the intranet, on the screensaver and any online community spaces for employees.
- Hold virtual talks on domestic abuse with speakers from specialist domestic abuse services. This is useful for individuals experiencing domestic abuse who may want help but do not want to disclose to a manager. Also useful for managers/employees.
- Make sure the individual knows they are not alone. Reiterate that the organisation will do what they can to safeguard and support them, even when working from home.

## 09. Record keeping

You should record and respond to any notifications or disclosures of domestic violence or abuse incidents including persistent phone calls, emails or visits to the individual by the perpetrator. Details of any witnesses to these incidents should also be noted.

Consideration should be given to whether the information should be 'protected' and so only available to named individuals directly involved.

All records must be held securely with restricted access. They should be kept away from official employee records.

Disclosures and absences should not impact the employees work record. There should be an agreement in place with the employee so that their performance is maintained as agreed. This agreement could form part of their official records. Any decision made to disclose information the employee has disclosed without their consent should be fully documented – for example, safeguarding concerns.

## 10. Flexible working requests

Offering temporary or permanent changes to the work base, working times and/or work patterns may help the individual to feel less at risk at work and on their journey to and from work.

You should discuss with the individual the support measures available, including a temporary change in hours or working arrangements.

Adjustments may include, for example, changes to the workplace to ensure the individual is not visible from reception points or ground floor windows.

## 11. Annual leave and time off requests

Speak to your HR personnel to facilitate allowing leave in cases of domestic abuse and to look jointly with HR at enabling requests for reasonable time off.

You may receive requests for time off from the individual to:

- Arrange appointments with support agencies during their normal working day
- Attend hearings as a witness in either the civil or criminal court if they have been called under a subpoena or a witness summons
- Attend court to seek an injunction or court order in cases of violence or harassment.



## 12. Responses where both victim and perpetrator are employees

Where both parties to the suspected domestic abuse are employees of your company, additional examples of safety measures could include:

- Prevent/restrict/monitor communications between the parties
- Prevent/restrict/monitor IT access
- Consider permanent/temporary role or responsibility changes for both parties to manage the risk
- Consider relocating one or both parties to different areas within offices and between sites.
- Consider adapting shift hours/patterns
- Manage or off-set meal/break times
- Where possible, restrict access to certain parts of offices/buildings/sites
- Seek permission to inform each parties line manager/s so they are aware of the situation and can monitor.
- Seek permission to inform trade union representatives
- Depending on the circumstances, consider meeting confidentially with both parties separately, reiterate company policies and the duty to safeguard all persons, and warn regarding possible disciplinary action
- Where there are breaches of company policy, seek to take appropriate disciplinary action
- It should be considered whether the abuser knows that the individual has accessed support. If they are unaware of this then it should be carefully considered what changes are made. If the abuser finds out that the individual is seeking support, it may increase the risk towards them.

## 13. Working with other agencies

Individuals should be advised of the local specialist services to support those affected by domestic abuse. Encouragement should be given to the individual to report the matter to the police.

City of London Police has specially trained officers who can support the individual through an investigation as well as being able to offer bespoke safeguarding advice covering matters such as personal safety and home security.

## 14. Support services

A staff association or union can offer information and workplace support as well as signposting to useful support organisations. Individuals should be offered access to and advice about the local specialist support services. They may feel more comfortable speaking to a third party. It should be explained to the individual that they are able to speak to a VVA within the City or a service local to them.

### 24 hour national domestic violence helpline

0808 2000 247 - offers support, help and information and can refer to refuge accommodation.

### National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline

Dedicated to confronting and eliminating domestic violence and abuse within and against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual communities.

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)  
Helpline number - 0800 999 5428

### City of London Police

In an emergency call 999.  
For non-emergency calls please phone 101.

### City of London Police Public Protection Unit

Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm only.  
020 7601 2940

### Vulnerable Victim Advocate (Victim Support)

020 7601 2968 or 07944 634946

### City Advice

Information about local services for those affected by domestic abuse who live or work in the City, as well as resources for professionals.  
[www.toynbeehall.org.uk/city-advice](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/city-advice)

### Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare's Law)

This scheme provides a formal method of asking the police for information if you believe that you, or somebody you know, is at risk of abuse from a partner or a former partner. The aim is to give people an informed choice on whether to continue a relationship and provide support whatever their decision.

For more detail contact the City of London Police Public Protection Unit.

### Men's advice line enquiries

Provides advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse.

[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)  
0808 801 0327

### Specialist domestic abuse services

Domestic abuse services provide independent and impartial advice, guidance and support on a range of topics such as safety planning, injunctions, housing and benefits. Services are free and confidential and available to both men and women.

### IKWRO

Support for women and girls from the Middle East who are risk of honour based abuse, forced marriage or domestic abuse.  
[www.ikwro.org.uk](http://www.ikwro.org.uk)

### Solace

Solace Women's Aid offers free advice and support to women and children in London to build safe and strong lives. Futures free from abuse and violence.  
[www.solacewomensaid.org](http://www.solacewomensaid.org)

### Imece

A charity which supports Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BMER) women, particularly Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot women to improve the quality of their lives.

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

### LAWRS

Support for Latin American Women  
[www.lawrs.org.uk](http://www.lawrs.org.uk)

### Safelives

A national charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for good. [www.safelives.org](http://www.safelives.org)

### Respect

Help & advice for perpetrators of domestic abuse.  
[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net) / 0808 802 4040

### Stalking helpline

A national helpline specialising in providing information and guidance to victims of harassment and stalking as well as their friends and family. Confidential helpline open from 9.30am until 4pm weekdays.

0808 802 0300 / [advice@stalkinghelpline.org](mailto:advice@stalkinghelpline.org)

### Survivors UK

Survivors UK offers a range of support services to male rape and sexual abuse victims including counselling and therapy appointments as well as web and SMS chat.

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

### Paladin

Provides support and advice for survivors of stalking and professionals.

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

## 15. Manager's checklist

### Role and responsibilities

As the manager you are responsible for:

- Ensuring the safety of individuals within your team while at work
- Being aware of the support available to individuals affected by domestic abuse both locally and nationally
- Meeting with the individual to discuss the support available to them and addressing any immediate safeguarding issues
- Considering adjustments to work- place and role which are necessary to address safeguarding concerns identified and deciding whether to implement where reasonable
- Maintaining appropriate standards of confidentiality
- Keep factual records of discussions with the employee – making sure these are restricted
- Signposting the individual to further support agencies if required
- Risk-assessing the nature of the individual's duties and considering if temporary restrictions are needed until a fuller assessment can take place – advice should be sought about risk assessing from a specialist Domestic Abuse service
- Be aware of the support available to individuals affected by domestic abuse both in the City and local to where they live

### Individuals are encouraged to:

- Advise you of any potential dangers, risks or domestic abuse that they are experiencing
- Alert you if they believe that a colleague may be experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse
- Work with you to ensure their own safety while at work, which may include temporarily withdrawing from certain operational duties

### The HR person who is supporting you (as the line manager) is responsible for:

Advising on application of this guide supporting with case management.

### The staff association or union representative is responsible for:

- Advising/supporting their member/colleague
- Signposting their member to further support agencies

## 16. Safety planning

One of the most important steps a victim of domestic abuse can take is to make a safety plan, both for home and the workplace. You can use the following tools to help an employee consider their options and plan for their safety.

Ask some of the following questions and record actions using the checklist "Employer Safety Plan".

- In what way can I (and others) help you?
- What do you feel would help you keep safe?
- Do you have any concerns about your children's safety?
- What have you tried in the past to protect yourself and your children?
- Did any of these strategies help?
- For specific safety advice in the workplace, see the checklist.

### General Safety Advice

- Arrange where you might go if you have to leave urgently.
- Find places where you can quickly and safely use the phone.
- Always carry a list of numbers with you in case of an emergency.
- Try to save money so that you have bus or taxi fares in an emergency.
- Get an extra set of keys for the house/ car.
- Keep the keys, money and anything else you may need in a safe place, should you have to leave quickly – if possible, keep a safe bag at work or with a relative/friend with photocopies of important documents, money, spare clothes and a mobile phone
- Talk to your children. Let them know it's not their fault. Children do not have to see abuse to be affected by it. They hear it, sense it and can be sad and frightened by it.
- Talk to friends, relatives, your doctor, nurse or others about how you feel.
- Talk through the Safety Plan Handout.
- Suggest, if appropriate, that the employee talks in more detail about safety outside the workplace with the police or other domestic abuse agency.

### If you decide to leave home, consider taking:

- Birth certificates
- Medical records
- Money
- Benefit books
- Work permits
- Several days clothing
- Marriage certificate
- Driving licence
- Credit cards
- Rent books
- Visa
- School records
- Car documents
- Cheque books
- Passports
- Medications
- Children's favourite toys
- Personal possessions with sentimental value

# 17. Safety checklist

## Employer's safety plan checklist

You can use the following tools to help an employee consider their options and plan for their safety.

Questions to ask	Action
In what way can I (and others) help you?	
What do you feel would help you keep safe?	
Do you have any concerns about your children's safety?	
What have you tried in the past to protect yourself and your children?	

Safety considerations at work	Action
Advise employee to keep emergency numbers at hand where possible	
Emergency contact person and details in case you can't contact the employee	
Have you identified the organisation's contact and given their details to the employee?	
Offer, if possible, changes to the employee's workplace location and work hours, especially if they do front line work or can be seen in the building.	

<p><b>Consider changing/increasing workplace security:</b></p> <p>Change keypad numbers</p> <p>Remind frontline staff not to give out personal information, including contact details and working hours</p> <p>Ensure the HR/Personnel information is secure</p> <p>Review parking arrangements – does someone need to escort the employee to their car?</p> <p>Discuss the possibility of getting a restraining order – this can include the workplace and childcare locations</p> <p>If the employee consents, advise colleagues (on a need to know basis) what they should do to help</p> <p>Do I have the employee's consent?</p> <p>Are there any other measure that could help? Discuss with employee</p>	

## General Safety Advice

- Talk through the Safety Plan Handout
- Suggest, if appropriate, that the employee talks in more detail about safety outside the workplace with the police

# 18. Safety plan

## Safety considerations at work

1	Keep emergency numbers easily accessible – consider the use of a mobile phone that connects directly to the police
2	Know who your contact person is in your organisation if you need help or advice
3	Give your organisation the name and number of an emergency contact person for you
4	Tell someone if you are receiving any sort of threat or harassment at work
5	Think about how you travel to and from work – try to make sure that you are not travelling alone or in the dark
6	If there is anything you think your employer can do to help increase your safety, ask as soon as possible

## General safety advice

1	Arrange where you might go if you have to leave urgently
2	Find places where you can quickly and safely use the phone
3	Always carry a list of numbers with you in case of an emergency

4	Try to save money so that you have bus or taxi fares in an emergency
5	Get an extra set of keys for the house/car
6	Keep the keys, money and anything else you may need in a safe place, should you have to leave quickly
7	Talk to your children. Let them know it's not their fault. Children do not have to see abuse to be affected by it. They hear it, sense it and can be sad and frightened by it
8	Talk to friends, relatives, your doctor, nurse or others about how you feel

## If you decide to leave home, consider taking:

- Birth certificates
- Medical records
- Money
- Benefit books
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- Several days clothing
- Marriage certificate
- Driving licence
- Credit cards
- Rent books
- Visa
- School records
- Car documents
- Cheque books

# 19. Top ten tips

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## 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 Know who your contact person is in your organisation if you need help or advice

## 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 the 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 on the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace
- 9 Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors

## Refer to the appropriate help

- 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.

 [cityoflondon.police.uk/spottingthesigns](https://cityoflondon.police.uk/spottingthesigns)

