

# Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

Guidance for Employers

Nov 2018



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte  
Máinnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)



Department of  
**Justice**

[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)



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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

- 1.1 This Guidance has been produced by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice in line with the [Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy](#), published in March 2016.
- 1.2 It has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders to provide advice on how employers across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors can develop increased awareness and more effective responses to domestic and sexual violence and abuse, for the benefit of all staff.
- 1.3 Domestic and sexual violence and abuse is a serious problem in Northern Ireland. It occurs right across our society and it has devastating consequences for the victims and their families.
- 1.4 In 2017/18 the 24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline answered **16,988 calls** and yet we know that the majority of incidents go under-reported and many victims remain silent.
- 1.5 This guide focuses on supporting employees who have been affected by, or are at risk of, domestic and/or sexual violence and abuse. By considering these guidelines and by drawing up a workplace policy and associated support mechanisms, employers can fulfil their duty of care to their employees and help create a safe and supportive workplace for all.

## 2. WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AND WHY IS IT A WORKPLACE ISSUE?

### Domestic Violence and Abuse

- 2.1 Domestic violence and abuse is generally recognised as a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of coercive control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent and is used to harm, 'punish' or frighten the victim. Women still make up the largest proportion of domestic violence victims but men can also be victims. Domestic violence can also occur in all relationships including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) relationships.
- 2.2 The NI Government's Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy defines domestic violence and abuse as: ***“threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member”***
- 2.3 Whilst domestic violence happens most often in intimate partner relationships, domestic violence which often includes sexual violence, can also happen between parents and children, brothers and sisters, family members and grandparents, and same sex or teenage relationships. It can also include violence inflicted on, or witnessed by, children and young people and this can have a long-term life changing impact.
- 2.4 It is not limited to physical and sexual violence. There is also, in many cases, emotional abuse which can include the undermining of self-confidence; controlling behaviour such as isolation from friends, family and support networks; financial abuse by controlling access to money, personal items, transportation and the telephone; threats; and stalking.

### THE FACTS

- PSNI recorded **29,913 domestic abuse incidents** in 2017/18
- **15% of all police recorded crime** in NI in 2017/18 had a domestic abuse motivation
- **1 in 4 women** and **1 in 7 men** have experienced domestic violence
- On average, there are **5 domestic homicides** in NI each year
- Domestic violence often **starts or escalates during pregnancy**
- In 2017/18, **Women's Aid in NI** supported **16,754 women and children** affected by domestic violence and **Men's Advisory Project** supported **1001 men**.

## Sexual Violence and Abuse

- 2.5 Sexual violence and abuse is an act that frequently aims to express power and dominance over the victim. It can take many forms, involving both contact and non-contact activity and it can include taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.
- 2.6 The NI Government's Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy defines sexual violence and abuse as:
- “any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability)”***
- 2.7 Sexual violence and abuse is very often perpetrated by someone whom the victim knows or trusts but it can also be perpetrated by a stranger.
- 2.8 It is also important to recognise that sexual violence and abuse may overlap with sexual harassment (unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature). Every employer should have a separate written policy that prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace along with clear reporting procedures.

### THE FACTS

- Sexual violence and abuse is a **crime**.
- It can happen to anyone and it is **never the fault of the victim**
- **1 in 7 adults** have experienced some form of sexual abuse
- **3,443 sexual offences** were reported to PSNI during 2017/18
- It can have a profound effect on **physical and mental health**
- **14,964 counselling sessions** were delivered by Nexus NI in 2017/18

## Why is this a Workplace Issue?

- 2.9 Home and work issues cannot always be separated and domestic and sexual violence can impact greatly on the working life of someone who is being abused. A person can continue to experience the violence and abuse in the workplace through, for example, abusive or threatening phone calls or emails and can be particularly vulnerable going to or from their place of work. All of this can affect their performance, attendance, timekeeping, career prospects and job security.
- 2.10 Other workers and colleagues can also be affected as they too could experience threatening or intimidating behaviour from the perpetrator and more particular issues can arise where both the perpetrator and the victim work in the same workplace or location.
- 2.11 A survey conducted by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 2014 into the impact of domestic violence on the workplace found that a third of the 1,734 people in Northern Ireland who responded had experienced domestic violence. Nearly all respondents said they thought that it had an impact on the working lives of employees.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.12 By having a Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy in place it is possible to create a safe and supportive working environment.

## How to recognise Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

- 2.13 Possible signs include:
- Late or high absenteeism rate without explanation;
  - Uncharacteristic depression, fatigue, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration;
  - Changes in the quality of work performance for no apparent reason;
  - Receipt of repeated upsetting calls or emails;
  - Obsession with time or needing regular time off for appointments;
  - Inappropriate or excessive clothing;
  - Repeated injuries, or unexplained bruising or explanations that do not fit the injuries displayed; and
  - Increased hours being worked for no apparent reason.
- 2.14 This is not an exhaustive checklist. Some victims may display no signs of violence or abuse. Everyone's reaction is different and changes in behaviour may be evident or they can be difficult to identify. It is also important to remember that whilst there are similarities in responses, domestic violence will affect women, men and LGBTQI in different ways and victims may need specialised support.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ictuni.org/publications/ictu-domestic-violence-survey-results/>

### **3 HOW A WORKPLACE POLICY CAN BENEFIT BUSINESS**

- 3.1 In Northern Ireland the direct cost of domestic and sexual violence and abuse to services and lost economic output is estimated to amount to **£931 million**<sup>2</sup>. It therefore makes sound business and economic sense for employers to have a workplace policy that supports employees experiencing domestic and sexual violence and abuse. Below are some key business reasons why it is a good investment for employers to have a workplace policy:

#### **Recruitment and Retention**

Creating a team of trained and experienced staff costs money. Having a workplace policy is a good investment for an employer helping to retain skilled, trained and experienced staff and thereby reducing the cost that occurs when staff leave. Also an employer who promotes health and wellbeing through their policies will be attractive to a much wider pool of potential applicants.

#### **Staff Morale and Productivity**

A workplace policy on domestic and sexual violence and abuse can help create a positive working environment. If staff feel that they are fully supported and confident in approaching their employer for help this can increase their morale, loyalty and commitment which in turn can have a positive impact on productivity.

#### **Disciplinary Action**

The effects of domestic and sexual violence and abuse can impact on attendance, punctuality, work performance, health and safety and productivity. A clear policy on domestic and sexual violence and abuse that enables employees to confide in the appropriate person at an early stage (such as Trade Union representatives, or Human Resources) can prevent unnecessary disciplinary action against an employee.

#### **Public Image and Reputation**

Employers who have a policy on domestic and sexual violence and abuse are communicating a powerful message to both employees, potential employees and the wider community that they are committed to supporting employees, the principles of equal opportunities and community investment. It underpins a strong sense of corporate social responsibility.

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<sup>2</sup>Estimated in the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy

## 4 THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Having in place an effective workplace policy can help employers comply with the following health and safety laws:
- The **Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978** under which employers have a duty of care to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of their employees.
  - The **Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006** which requires employers to assess the risks of violence to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation and control.
  - The **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NI) 1997** and the **Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (NI) 1996**, also relevant to violence at work.
- 4.2 A workplace policy can also help public authorities comply with their duty under the **Human Rights Act 1998**, to protect the human rights of individuals and ensure they are not being violated. Domestic and sexual violence and abuse constitutes a clear violation of a person's human rights and failure to address this issue in the workplace could be regarded as an infringement of the Human Rights Act.
- 4.3 Section 75 of the **Northern Ireland Act 1998** also requires designated public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 4.4 In addition to the above legal obligations, employers have an ethical and moral duty to protect and support employees experiencing domestic and sexual violence and abuse. For the victims the workplace must be a place of safety, help and support.

## 5. WHAT SHOULD A WORKPLACE POLICY COVER?

5.1 The checklist below identifies the key areas that should be included within a workplace policy and the following link provides a sample policy:

[Belfast Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership](#)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>CONTENT</b>
	<b>A robust policy statement and organisational commitment</b> to a zero tolerance approach to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.
	A clear <b>definition</b> of ‘Domestic Violence and Abuse’ and ‘Sexual Violence and Abuse’ (see section 2) with useful facts and figures.
	<b>Reporting procedures</b> including roles, responsibilities and contact details of Human Resources, Line Managers, employees and Trade Union representatives where relevant (see section 6).
	Information about the <b>practical and supportive measures</b> which can be accessed by employees. This may include diverting phone calls or alerting reception and security staff (see section 6).
	<b>A list of support services</b> (see section 8).
	A commitment to prioritise confidentiality where possible.
	<b>A communication plan</b> to, for example, publish the policy on the organisation’s intranet and staff newsletter/handbook so that all staff can be made aware of its aims.
	<b>Information about staff training</b> on the implications of domestic and sexual violence and abuse in the workplace and what the policy offers.
	<b>A process for monitoring and reviewing</b> the policy on a regular basis.

5.2 Even with limited resources there are steps that can be taken to address the effects of domestic and sexual violence and abuse in the workplace. In many cases it is about being aware and sign posting to organisations that provide specialist support. This can include displaying posters and leaflets within the workplace and working in partnership with Trade Unions.

## **6. SUPPORT AND SAFETY MEASURES IN THE WORKPLACE**

- 6.1 It is important that staff know from a workplace policy that there is someone they can talk to if they have been affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse. This could be:

### **Line Managers**

Individual Line Managers (in consultation with Human Resources) can play a key role in supporting staff who have been affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse. Their role is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make a managerial commitment to assist the member of staff and outline what help is available to them. Managers should also be aware that some employees may feel more vulnerable because of their ethnic background, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability, for example.

### **Welfare Services or Occupational Health**

Welfare Services can provide the necessary emotional support for victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse and can visit a member of staff should they be on leave from work due to sick absence. Welfare should also signpost the individual to other support services for information and advice (see section 8).

### **Human Resources**

Human Resources has a central responsibility to develop and make available policy and procedures on supporting staff affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse and to advise managers and employees on its implementation.

### **Trade Union Representatives** (where relevant)

Trade Union Representatives can offer support, encouragement and guidance to the person who has been affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse. They can ensure that the person is aware of the organisation's workplace policy, discuss the various options open to them and agree a way forward. It is not their role to act as counsellor, this task can only be undertaken by a professionally qualified person.

### **Other Employees**

Other employees can assist and support co-workers in gaining confidence to tackle and report domestic and sexual violence and abuse. They should also be able to speak in confidence to their line manager or Human Resources/Personnel if they have concerns about the safety of a colleague.

## Practical Support Measures

- 6.2 A workplace policy should also contain information on practical and supportive measures available in the workplace where possible. This may include:
- Diverting phone calls and emails.
  - Alerting reception and security staff if the abuser/alleged abuser is known to come to the workplace.
  - Allowing more flexible working or special leave to facilitate any practical arrangements (such as attending counselling or court).
  - Checking the employee has arrangements for safely getting to and from home and if possible provide a personal alarm.
  - Ensuring the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area.
  - Moving the employee out of public view i.e. ensuring that they are not visible from reception points or ground floor windows.
  - Keeping a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails etc.
  - If the employee is absent, a method of communication should be arranged with line managers so that they are aware that the individual is safe.
  - Offering a salary advance where, for example, the employee needs to escape a violent or abusive situation or where their own money is being withheld by an abusive partner.
  - Having in place a trained support officer or Domestic and Sexual Violence Champion in the workplace, if resources permit.
- 6.3 It is important that employers rely on professionals to provide appropriate services. This could be training, support and advice or counselling services. There are many professional groups who are specifically trained to deal with this.
- 6.4 Training from the experts in the field (such as Nexus NI, Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project and Rainbow) is also useful for Human Resources/Line Managers or Support Officers, so that they can respond sensitively and appropriately. Employers can play an important supporting role by developing policies, raising awareness among the workforce and having trained staff who can provide a listening ear to help colleagues make the right decision on where to go next for advice and support.
- 6.5 When an employee discloses domestic and sexual violence and abuse the employer should encourage the individual to contact a specialist support agency (see section 8).

## **7. PERPETRATORS WHO ARE EMPLOYEES**

- 7.1 It is often possible for perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence and abuse to use workplace resources such as phones, email and other means, to threaten, harass or abuse an individual. They may also involve other colleagues, who may or may not be aware of their motives in assisting them.
- 7.2 Such abuse requires an effective employer response because it could be damaging and potentially dangerous for those being abused, as well as possibly bringing the organisation into disrepute. Please note that the circumstances of a case involving workplace resources and staff may be investigated by the police when a crime is reported.
- 7.3 Employers should make a clear commitment to challenge perpetrators. All employees should be aware that misconduct inside and outside of work will be viewed seriously and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. It is also the responsibility of an employee who is a perpetrator to inform their employer if they have been charged. Employers should also be clear about their responsibility to report matters which could be regarded as criminal to the relevant authority.
- 7.4 It may also be appropriate to help an employee, who is a perpetrator, to seek advice and information about addressing their behaviour (see section 8).
- 7.5 Employers should advise employees to liaise with Human Resources and their own internal policies.

## 8. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

8.1 **Anyone in immediate danger should contact 999.**

8.2 There is a range of specialist organisations that are there to support victims and those who are working with them or their family and friends. For more information and advice about where to get help contact:



### **24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline**

24/7 support for women and men

**Freephone 0808 802 1414**

Text 'support' to 07797 805 839

Email: [24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org](mailto:24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org)



### **The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre**

24/7 support and services for anyone who has been sexually abused, assaulted or raped

**Freephone 0800 389 4424**

**[www.therowan.net](http://www.therowan.net)**



**[nidirect](http://nidirect)**

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/domestic-and-sexual-violence](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/domestic-and-sexual-violence)**

## CASE STUDY

*A nurse has had a series of periodic short term absences. Her manager has noted that the nurse has become subdued and quite withdrawn. The manager has attended an awareness session on domestic abuse and is aware of some of the potential signs. During a return to work discussion, instead of recommending referral to Occupational Health or issuing a verbal warning, the manager asks if there are any issues at home – reluctantly the nurse discloses that there are problems in her relationship and that her partner has become verbally abusive to her.*

*With the nurse's consent, the manager phones HR for advice. The HR domestic abuse support officer outlines potential support for the nurse within the workplace and suggests that if the nurse wants to meet, they can do this. A meeting is arranged and during the course of the meeting, the nurse discloses that not only has her partner become verbally abusive over previous years, her partner has also physically assaulted her but only in areas where bruising or cuts are not visible. The support officer indicates that there are many practical ways in which she can be helped in the workplace and also signposts her to external specialist areas. The nurse decides to go away and think about it. Another meeting is scheduled for the following week and she indicates that she wants to leave the home however there is financial control in the relationship too – in that her partner takes her salary once it is paid into their joint account and allocates her a minimal allowance. The support officer arranges that the salary is paid in advance into a new account that the nurse has had set up. The support officer then suggests that the nurse may wish to telephone the 24Hr Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline for further advice and support.*

*Once all the arrangements are in place, the nurse leaves the marital home and moves temporarily into a refuge with her children.*

*This can often be a dangerous time as the partner may feel that they are losing control and can often present risks for the victim. Her partner begins to come to the workplace and wait outside for her when she is coming off night shift. She contacts HR who arrange for her hours and her place of work to be changed and provide her with a personal alarm. With her permission, her colleagues are advised of the situation and further safety measures are put in place.*

*As a result of the support and advice provided by HR the nurse has remained in the workplace and has not been subject to disciplinary action due to her absences. She has been able to confide in someone and been able to make an informed decision regarding herself and her children's future. With internal and external sources of support and a salary advance, she has been empowered to make the choice to leave the abusive situation.*

*The safety measures put in place mean that the nurse can continue to work and stay safe too.*

**SAMPLE WORKPLACE POLICY**

*Provided by the Belfast Local Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership*



# **Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

*Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic and  
Sexual Violence and Abuse*

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## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to support and help employees who are experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse.

This agreement covers all employees, and (THE EMPLOYER) will additionally offer support to agency and contract staff as far as possible.

This agreement complements, but is not restricted by, other equal opportunities and flexible working agreements, including (LIST OF RELEVANT AGREEMENTS).

This agreement should be supported by a more detailed procedure drawn up by (THE EMPLOYER) for managers to use.

## Principles

(THE EMPLOYER) is committed to the principle that Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse is unacceptable behavior and everyone has the right to live free from fear and abuse.

(THE EMPLOYER) recognizes the scope of Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse and its responsibility for the well-being of staff and will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse.

(THE EMPLOYER) is committed to working in partnership with other agencies/bodies to ensure support is available for staff who are experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse.

This agreement is part of (THE EMPLOYER)'s commitment to family friendly working, and seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance; and enhance the reputation of (THE EMPLOYER) as an employer of choice.

## Definition of Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse

For the purpose of this policy, Domestic Violence and Abuse is essentially a pattern of behavior which is characterized by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. The DHSSPS and DOJ *Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland Strategy 2016* defines Domestic Violence and Abuse as; “Threatening, controlling, coercive behavior, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.”

The strategy defines Sexual Violence and Abuse as “any behavior (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability). Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behavior includes taking advantage of an individual’s incapacity to give informed consent.”

Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse is rarely a one off event is usually frequent and persistent. It knows no boundaries as regards age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography, but in the majority of reported cases women are the victims. While the majority of victims are women men are also affected as are men and women in same sex relationship.

Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse affects all members of a household. Given the vulnerability of children they are particularly susceptible to the impact of violence in the home. Children may be injured as a result of Domestic Violence and frequently witness violent events.

## Impact on the workplace

(THE EMPLOYER) recognizes that home and work issues cannot always be separated and that Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse can impact greatly on the working life of employees and can result in:

- A deterioration in employee performance
- Increased and unexplained absenteeism.
- Poor timekeeping
- Threat to job security and prospects

(THE EMPLOYER) recognizes that people experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse are at increasing risk when they attempt to leave an abusive partner. They may become vulnerable going to and coming from work, or while they are at work as the perpetrator knows where they can be located. This can give rise to Health and Safety issues including the risk of violence occurring in the workplace.

## Legislation

(THE EMPLOYER) is aware of their duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the Health and Safety at work of employees.

(THE EMPLOYER) recognizes its responsibility under the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations (NI) 1992 to assess the risks of violence to employees and make arrangements for their Health and Safety by effective planning, organization and control.

(THE EMPLOYER) is aware of their responsibility under the Human Rights Act 1998 in particular;

- Article 2 the right to life
- Article 3 the right not to be tortured or inhumanely or degradingly treated or punished
- Article 4 the right not to be required to perform forced labour
- Article 5 the right to liberty and security of person
- Article 8 the right to respect for one's private and family life, home and correspondence

## General Measures

(THE EMPLOYER) will inform all staff of the issue and what support is available using noticeboards, the intranet, staff briefings, inductions and other means. This includes internal support and local and national external organisations.

(THE EMPLOYER) will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

Staff experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse may report it to a union representative, a line manager, or colleague. (THE EMPLOYER) will provide training for all managers on Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse and appropriate responses. This will also be included in inductions for new managers. Line managers will not counsel victims, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

A member of (HUMAN RESOURCES), trained in Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff. This person will also provide guidance for line managers who are approached by staff who are experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse.

## Role of the Line Manager

Where Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse has been reported line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

Line managers will offer employees experiencing Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing of childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with a perpetrator who may be a customer or a fellow employee.
- Redeployment or relocation
- Offer financial support by way of an advance in pay
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Monitoring social media for harassment or abuse towards the employee,
- Diverting emails to a separate folder
- Getting places on assertiveness training courses
- Using other existing policies (including Flexible working, others)
- Paid leave to recover from stress /psychological impact

## Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Line managers will respect the right of staff to make their own decision on the appropriate course of action at every stage.

Other existing provisions (including OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, COUNSELLING SERVICE, OTHER) will also be available to staff as a means of help and support.

All records concerning Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse and there will be no adverse impact on employment records.

Information will only be disclosed with the express permission of the individual, unless there are legal requirements to the contract (for example Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse is frequently linked to child abuse, and where a risk to children or vulnerable adults is identified the employer's responsibility for public protection may lead them to notify social services. If this happens, the individual will be informed.

## Perpetrators in the Workplace

Managing perpetrators in the work place will require individual consideration and will depend on the following;

- The employees role in the organization, for example if their role involves working with children and vulnerable adults
- The role of the organization
- The nature of the conviction

Organisations should take action in line with their organizational procedures and should consider legal advice where necessary.

Any employee who uses the time, property or resources of (THE EMPLOYER) to abuse a partner or family member will be dealt with under the (APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT POLICY)

If a victim and the alleged perpetrator are both employed by (THE EMPLOYER), any incidents at work will be dealt with under the (APPROPRIATE POLICY).

(THE EMPLOYER) will take action to minimize the potential for a perpetrator to use his position or resources at work to access details of his partner or ex-partner.

(THE EMPLOYER) should grant time off work to attend perpetrator programmes.

## Useful Resources/ Support Services

1. Local Women's Aid Groups across NI  
<https://www.womensaidni.org/get-help/local-groups/>
2. Men's Advisory Project (MAP)  
<http://www.mapni.co.uk>
3. The Rainbow Project  
<http://www.rainbow-project.org/>
4. Nexus NI  
<http://www.nexusni.org/>
5. HSC Regional Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace, September 2010 (copy available on)  
[www.belfastdvp.co.uk](http://www.belfastdvp.co.uk)



6. Domestic Abuse- A Trade Union Guide ICTU  
issued by Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
Women's Committee, Nov 2009  
[www.ictu.ie/equality/gender/genderbaseddviol.html](http://www.ictu.ie/equality/gender/genderbaseddviol.html)
7. Domestic Violence – A Trade Union Guide –  
NIPSA No 2011  
[www.nipsa.org.uk/Home/EqualOpportunities/Publications/Domestic-Violence-A-Trade-Union-Guide](http://www.nipsa.org.uk/Home/EqualOpportunities/Publications/Domestic-Violence-A-Trade-Union-Guide)
8. Respect – Domestic Violence Resource  
Manual for Employers  
[www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html](http://www.respect.uk.net/pages/the-domestic-violence-resource-manual-for-employers.html)

## INFOGRAPHIC

### Domestic Violence in the Workplace - Make it your Business

<http://belfastdvp.co.uk/themainevent/wp-content/uploads/Domestic-abuse-in-the-workplace-amended-Aug-151.pdf>

## DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS

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### Reality



One Domestic Abuse Incident every 19 minutes of every day across Northern Ireland



75% of abused women are targeted at work

53% of abused women miss at least 3 days of work a month

Cost to the N.I. Economy

# £ 180m

a year

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### Raise Awareness in the Workplace

Communicate to all staff that your organisation has a Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy

Use posters, leaflets and helpline cards



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### Recognise the Problem

Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance such as poor timekeeping and absentee levels 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



**OPTION 1**  
Reassure the employee that the organisation can and will offer support and that support is also available from their trade union representative

**OPTION 2**  
Discuss options such as changes to working times, relocation or redeployment

**OPTION 3**  
Divert phone calls and emails messages 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

Consider special leave for any appointments with support agencies

Ensure the employee does not work alone and that they can get safely from home to work

**GET HOME SAFELY**



Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline  
0808 802 1414

### Remember ....

Attempting to leave an abusive relationship may increase the risk to employees experiencing Domestic Violence

**IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999**

30 Adelaide Park  
Belfast  
BT9 6PT  
Tel: (028) 90 666 949  
Fax: (028) 90 662 874  
Web: www.belfastdvp.co.uk



**Belfast Area**  
Domestic Violence Partnership

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Department of Health and the Department of Justice would like to express their gratitude to the following organisations for their contributions:

**Belfast Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership**

**Irish Congress of Trade Unions**

**Nexus NI**

**Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality**

**Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)**

**South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership**

**UNISON**

**Victim Support NI**

**Women's Aid Federation NI**



**Department of Justice**

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02890 523776

**Department of Health**

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