

If a manager or colleague suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should discuss the issue on a general level and identify and implement appropriate support.

We recognise that this is an extremely difficult conversation to have, therefore it is advisable to discuss the issue with Human Resources in advance, who can provide advice and guidance.

Some important things to remember include:

- ✓ Be patient, let the employee open up in their own time.
- ✓ Listen attentively and allow plenty of time and space for them to speak.
- ✓ Have an open posture. Reach towards them but be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space.
- ✓ Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful.
- ✓ Do not be judgemental. Avoid language that indicates blame or fault (“Why don’t you leave?” / “How can you let this happen?” / “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”)

Below are some examples of questions and prompts that could be used to open up the conversation:

- ✓ How are you doing at the moment?
- ✓ Your wellbeing is important to me and I’ve noticed that you seem distracted/ upset at the moment – are you ok?
- ✓ If there’s anything you’d like to talk to me about at any time I’m always here to support you.
- ✓ Is everything all right at home?
- ✓ You don’t have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready.
- ✓ What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?

If an employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse:

- ✓ Acknowledge their courage.
- ✓ Make it clear that you believe them – do not ask for proof.
- ✓ Show empathy and compassion.
- ✓ Ask how you can help them
- ✓ Do not make assumptions about what someone is experiencing.
- ✓ Ensure they know that you will support them in any way possible.
- ✓ Reassure them that the information they have shared will be treated in the strictest confidence (with the exceptions of threat to life or harm of a child or vulnerable adult, in which case the manager should advise the employee that they will have to contact [Family Connect](#) for advice on how to proceed. If the employee lives outside of the borough Family Connect will advise on the appropriate service to contact)
- ✓ Consider what steps might be necessary to ensure they remain safe in the workplace, in case a perpetrator suspects they may have reported the abuse.
- ✓ Discuss support options with the employee, in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Policy and guidance (see Guidance Notes 4 and 5 for sources of support and types of support).

If an employee is disclosing fears for their safety, advise them that they should call the police and support them to do so.

Managers should ask the employee about what support they need and regularly check in with that question, as the support they need may change over time as the individual’s circumstances change. Let the individual take the lead in what they want to talk about and what they think the problem is.

Ask the individual about the best way to keep in contact with them going forward, for example which communication methods are private and which they have easy access to.

For more information on sources of support see Guidance Note 4 and for information on types of support available see Guidance Note 5.

Cultivating an Inclusive Response

It is vital that employees feel confident to disclose domestic abuse. It is important to understand that there may be issues relating to personal characteristics that can make it more challenging for an employee experiencing abuse to come forward. For example:

- ✓ People with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled people and less likely to report it. In addition the abuse is likely to be more severe, more frequent and extending for longer periods of time than for non-disabled people. Abuse linked to disability can be an additional barrier to asking for support, for example, as the individual might need to disclose their disability to their employer when they had preferred not to.
- ✓ Ethnic minority women are often made responsible for their family's honour. When abuse is disclosed, it often means leaving more than just the perpetrator. ([Nour Domestic Violence Charity](#))
- ✓ 29% of respondents to the government's National LGBT Survey 2017 experienced at least one negative incident involving someone they lived with, due to their LGBT status, in the 12 months preceding the survey. However, more than 9 in 10 of the most serious incidents went unreported. In addition, LGBT+ employees might not be open about their sexuality at work meaning that disclosing abuse might also involve coming out. ([Galop](#))
- ✓ Transgender women and men have fewer tailored services available to them (Galop)
- ✓ Men find it more difficult to disclose abuse and often find more barriers to accessing support, however they are slightly more likely than women to talk to a colleague about what is happening to them.
- ✓ Make no assumptions about older employees – abuse does not discriminate in relation to age.