

Once an employee has disclosed that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it is very important to discuss the different forms of support that may be available to them.

Every employee should be treated as an individual as everyone's situation will be different. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach when considering support options and it is important not to make assumptions about what someone is experiencing or what help they need.

Remember that when it comes to discussing support options, these should be led by the individual's wishes and their safety and wellbeing should always take priority.

If the employee discloses abuse but is not ready to take any action, the manager can agree to keep in regular contact with the employee until they wish to make some practical changes.

When considering support options, some points to bear in mind include:

- Does the abusive partner / perpetrator work at the same organisation?
- Does the employee work in a role that leaves them alone and vulnerable to stalking and harassment?
- Are they vulnerable to harassment at work, or when leaving work?
- Will they become more vulnerable at work if they leave their partner, as this will be somewhere that they can be located?

Managers can contact Health & Safety for advice on carrying out a risk assessment to identify potential risks and put in place control measures to mitigate these risks. It is also worth being aware that specialist support agencies can undertake a [Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Violence \(DASH\) risk assessment](#) and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

### **Types of support available:**

#### **Adjustments to the employee's role:**

- ✓ Use of the [Flexible Working Policy](#) where changes to working patterns, flexible working arrangements, changes to duties or work location are required (either on a temporary or permanent basis).
- ✓ Make reasonable adjustments where an employee's health or performance is affected by domestic abuse.

#### **Time off:**

- ✓ Use of the [Special Leave policy](#) where time off is required for emergencies or appointments. Examples include: attending court; attending mediation; meeting or calling a solicitor; viewing properties; meeting teachers at school; talking to the bank, getting advice from domestic violence organisations, having counselling. This flexibility may differ in the short and longer term and it is worth bearing in mind that flexibility is likely to be required for some time after the abuse has stopped.

#### **Personal safety at work:**

- ✓ Providing access to the council's lone worker safety system – [StaySafe](#). This app and cloud based monitoring system enables employee to request assistance in case of emergency.
- ✓ Ensuring that the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
- ✓ Moving the employee out of public view, ensuring that they are not visible from reception points or ground floor windows

- ✓ Diverting phone calls and email messages and changing phone extension number if an employee is receiving harassing calls.
- ✓ If the employee has a visitor, ensuring that they only attend reception if they are confident that the identity of the visitor has been verified.

#### Personal Safety outside of work:

- ✓ Checking that the employee can get safely to and from home and considering specific areas of the work environment where the employee's physical safety may be at risk.
- ✓ Providing a car parking space close to the building, with good lighting.
- ✓ If the employee doesn't arrive at work at the determined time, agreeing a way to contact the employee to ensure their safety.

#### Personal Safety when working at home:

- ✓ With the employee's consent, agreeing code words, or hand signals in video calls, so if they don't come into the office, or if they are in a threatening situation while working at home, there are set phrases both parties can say to enable them to flag if they are in danger, for example the two step '**Signal for Help**' (palm towards camera with thumb tucked inwards and then curl the fingers)



- ✓ Wherever possible, ensuring at least one call per day with the manager or a colleague (ideally with the camera is switched on).

#### Colleagues at work:

- ✓ Agreeing what to tell colleagues and how they should respond if the abuser telephones or visits the workplace
- ✓ Providing reception staff with a clear robust procedure for any planned and unplanned visitors that the employee has, particularly if the abuser is known to come to the workplace.
- ✓ Reminding reception / colleagues not to divulge information about employees, especially personal details such as addresses, telephone numbers or working patterns / locations.

#### Building arrangements:

- ✓ Ensuring non-employees cannot access our buildings

#### Financial Support:

- ✓ Changing pay arrangements or considering emergency financial support to help someone facing an immediate crisis, such as through a salary advance.

Support may also take the form of **signposting to other organisations** who can provide help and advice (see Guidance Note 4 for details of the sources of support that are available from internal, regional and national services, charities and organisations).

Remember to keep a record of any incidents of abuse in the workplace, including persistent telephone calls, emails or visits to the workplace or any concerns that the employee reports, as well as anything that occurs around the workplace, such as during travel to and from work or to meetings not held in the usual place of work. It is also important to keep a record of the support offered.

It is important to remember that, even if an employee leaves an abusive relationship, support will need to remain in place for them as abuse often continues when a relationship has ended, with the time around separation being a particularly dangerous time for a victim.