

An estimated 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

Two women each week and one man each month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner.

On average, the police receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour.

1 in 8 of all suicides and suicide attempts are due to domestic abuse.

These are some shocking statistics, but what do we mean when we talk about domestic abuse?

What is domestic abuse?

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is: 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.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.” *

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Who it affects:

Men, women and children all experience domestic abuse, and can also all be perpetrators of abuse. However, evidence shows that women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and the majority of perpetrators are men. It takes place at all levels of society, regardless of social class, race, religion, sexuality or disability. Individuals may experience abuse or be affected by it long after they have left their partner.

Indicators of domestic abuse:

It is not always easy to detect when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse. Abuse is often associated with physical violence, but it may also be emotional or psychological. The indicators may point towards a problem with domestic abuse, but they could also be the result of a different issue such as ill health. As a manager, you should be looking out for these issues more generally as an indicator that something might be wrong, without assuming it will be related to domestic

abuse. The more supportive atmosphere you can create, the more likely employees are going to feel comfortable disclosing a problem with domestic abuse.

Indicator 1 - Work productivity

This might include:

- Change in the employee's working patterns: for example, frequent absence, lateness or needing to leave work early.
- Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards.
- Change in the use of the phone/email: for example, a large number of personal calls/texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails.
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no reason.
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner, which may indicate coercive control.

Indicator 2 - Changes in behaviour or demeanour

- Conduct which is out of character with previous behaviour.
- Changes in behaviour, for example, becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, or depressed.
- Being isolated from colleagues.
- Obsession with leaving work on time.
- Being secretive regarding home life.
- Worrying about leaving children at home.

Indicator 3 - Physical indicators

- Visible bruising or single or repeated injury with unlikely explanations.
- Change in the pattern or amount of makeup used.
- Change in the manner of dress, for example, clothes that do not suit the climate which may be used to hide injuries.
- Substance use/misuse.
- Fatigue/sleep disorders.

Domestic Abuse and Working from Home

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives and for many, the boundaries between work and home have become less clear. For those for whom home is not a safe place, this has led to feelings of fear and isolation and the removal of work as a means of escape from their abuser.

It is more important than ever before for managers to keep in touch with employees in order to meet their duty of care remotely.

Wherever possible, managers should ensure that no employee goes a full working day without being part of at least one call with a colleague. If contact is lost, managers must be prepared to visit in person.

Managers should also ensure their team members are aware of the support available to them (see Guidance Note 4 – Sources of Support and Guidance Note 5 – Types of Support) and encourage them to download apps such as [Bright Sky](#) which provides practical support and information for those experiencing domestic abuse or those who are worried about someone else.

Child to Parent Abuse

There is currently no legal definition of Child to Parent Abuse. However, it is recognised as a form of domestic abuse and depending on the age of child, it may fall under the official definition of domestic abuse. It takes place at all levels of society but only a small percentage of actual incidents are reported to the police.

Abusive behaviours can encompass, but are not limited to, humiliating language and threat, belittling a parent, damage to a property, stealing from parents, physical violence and sexual abuse.

Parents are usually reluctant to report violence from their child due to fear of isolation, guilt and shame surrounding their child's violence towards them and fear that their parenting skills will be questioned. Those who disclose, sometimes, find it difficult to access the specialised support services.

Managers should ensure that their team members are aware of Child to Parent Abuse and the support services available to them (see Guidance Note 4 – Sources of Support and Guidance Note 5 – Types of Support).