



Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse in the Workplace A Model Policy

***Belfast Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse
Partnership
Working together to end Domestic & Sexual Violence***

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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. Regional Steering Group on Domestic Violence, 2006, Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse: Guidance for Employers
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dv-guidance-for-employers-pdf
2. Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid
www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk
3. Men's Advisory Project (MAP)
<http://www.mapni.co.uk>
4. The Rainbow Project
<http://www.rainbow-project.org/>
5. HSC Regional Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace, September 2010 (copy available on)
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
7. Domestic Violence – A Trade Union Guide – NIPSA No 2011
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


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

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

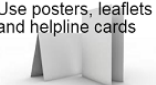
£180m

a year

Raise Awareness in the Workplace

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


Use posters, leaflets and helpline cards



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

