



Human Resources

Domestic Violence – Manager Guide

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1. Introduction

This guide supports our [Wellbeing Policy](#). It will help you assist an employee who is, or who you may be concerned is, experiencing domestic violence. It includes information on the workplace and external support available.

Domestic violence is defined as any violence between family members. This can include current or former partners both of a heterosexual and same sex nature, whenever and wherever the violence occurs. It may also be controlling behaviours or threats of a physical, sexual, emotional or financial nature. It harms women and men of all ages, cultures and backgrounds.

Domestic violence can have an impact on an individual's performance at work; including punctuality, attendance, health and safety, capability and productivity. Research has shown that people who experience domestic violence have had to take time off work because of injuries, arranging new child care, finding a safe place to stay, attending meetings with their Solicitor and court appearances. They are also likely to suffer from symptoms that may have a long-term effect on their work performance such as depression, anxiety, or stress.

You can help your employees, and minimise the impact on work, by providing a safe working environment, understanding the impact of domestic violence and offering emotional support and practical help.

If you need further support to help your employee you can seek confidential advice from HR. You can also contact EmployeeCare for free, confidential and independent counselling, 24 hours a day, on 0800 756 9804.

2. Understanding domestic violence

It is unlikely that someone experiencing domestic violence will tell their colleagues or even approach you with their problems in the first instance. It is more likely that you will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as return to work interviews or performance reviews. They may be unwilling to undertake overtime or participate in office social events and it is important that they are not made to feel guilty or put under pressure for not joining in. As with other welfare issues, identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage will lead to appropriate help being offered. This in turn could mean that they are able to deal with their situation far more effectively. **Remember however, there may be other explanations for these behaviours – you shouldn't jump to conclusions.**

3. Support and encouragement

If your employee confides in you, be sensitive, non-judgemental and reassuring. You can support your employee by:

- treating them with respect and dignity, making time to listen to them, taking them seriously, and believing what they tell you
- ensuring that any discussion about their situation takes place in privacy and that you respect their confidentiality
- understanding that they may be more comfortable to involve a third party such as a colleague, a Union Representative, HR or EmployeeCare.
- giving them time to decide what to do. They may need to try many different options during this process. Research has shown that it can take a long time to break free of a violent relationship. You should not assume that because an individual returns or stays in a violent relationship that the violence was not severe or did not take place
- being aware that loss of self-esteem can affect a persons behaviour and demeanour. You will need to show understanding and tolerance. Behavioural changes may be a sign to encourage them to seek help

- discussing what further support can be provided, either through Nationwide's policies, or through external organisations – more information on this is provided below in section 5 below

4. **Discussing domestic violence and work related issue issues**

During your discussions you may need to encourage your employee to take further action if you fear for their safety or feel that there is a conflict at work. Try to agree how and when they will update you on their circumstances and what, if anything, you can tell other work colleagues.

It is possible that an employee shares a Nationwide account with the person committing domestic violence or is aware of other accounts they or other family members hold. They may be under pressure financially, but it is important that they do not put their job at risk by conducting unauthorised transactions or disclosing information. You may need to counsel them tactfully about this - if they need some financial help they may be eligible for a welfare loan (see below).

You may also want to discuss their work pattern with them or agree some time off so that they can seek help, attend appointments or make alternative living arrangements.

It is possible that the person committing domestic violence will be known to you, perhaps through a social event. This may make it difficult to deal with them, especially if they are a customer in their own right. Do not try to intervene or confront them - but encourage the employee to contact an external agency for help.

There may be cases when the person committing the violence is another employee. Although it is not your responsibility to take action against an employee who is suspected of being violent to a partner or ex partner, if an employee commits act of abuse or violence at work, this may result in grievance for harassment and bullying and / or disciplinary action under our [Disciplinary Policy](#). If this occurs, contact AskHR on (01793) 556808, option 6.

5. **Other sources of support**

There are a number of Nationwide policies that can provide support and practical help to an employee who is experiencing domestic violence:

Time Off: Someone experiencing domestic violence may need to request time off to deal with specific situations such as court attendance, to move to safe housing or simply to take a holiday to be free from day-to-day demands. There are a range of [Time Off](#) and [Family Friendly](#) policies that provide specific paid or unpaid leave. You should treat any such requests for leave sympathetically, and try to agree to these requests wherever you can.

Welfare Fund: The Welfare Fund can provide emergency financial help. Interest free loans of £500 may be available. These are normally repaid by deductions from salary. More information is contained in our [Financial Support and Benefits Policy](#).

EmployeeCare: An employee suffering domestic violence is likely to suffer from symptoms that may have a long-term effect on their work performance such as depression, anxiety or stress. A free, confidential and independent counselling and information service is available to all Nationwide Group employees. The service provides a free-phone helpline giving employees 24-hour access to telephone counselling and personal legal information. They can be contacted on 0800 358 6858.

Managing Customer Conflict: Nationwide will not tolerate violence at work against our employees. Although it is unlikely domestic violence will transfer to the workplace, guidance and a risk assessment procedure is available to help minimise the risks of workplace violence. Further information can be found in the Branch Security Manual on the intranet.

As well as the support that can be provided by our workplace policies, your employee may benefit from seeking external support which is available from a number of organisations and agencies. Contact details are provided in Appendix A. If your employee is a member, support and advice is also available to them from the Nationwide Group Staff Union (NGSU) on 01295 710767.

Appendix A: External Contacts

Anyone experiencing domestic violence, male or female, can contact statutory agencies like the police, social services, local authority housing departments, health services, or voluntary agencies for help, information and support. Listed below are some national organisations you may wish to contact.

- **Crown Prosecution Service Public Enquiry Point**
0203 357 0000
www.cps.gov.uk
Provides general information and practical information (not legal advice) on the CPS and advice on who to contact. There are CPS domestic violence co-ordinators in each local area
- **NSPCC**
National Child Protection Helpline
www.nspcc.org.uk
0808 800 500 (Text – 88858)
help@nspcc.org.uk
Free confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk, including children themselves.
- **Police**
Look in the phone book for details of local contacts. Police forces have specialist 'vulnerable persons' or 'domestic violence' units to offer information about options, whether or not victims go through the prosecution process. In an emergency call the police on 999.
- **Samaritans**
08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org.uk
24-hour Confidential, emotional support for anyone in crisis.
- **Shelterline**
0808 800 4444
www.shelter.org.uk
24-hour national housing advice line
- **Victim Support**
0845 30 30 900
www.victimsupport.org.uk
Trained staff and volunteers offer free and confidential information.

Support for Women:

- **Action on Elder Abuse**
For information and support about abuse against older women.
Astral House, 1268 London Road, London, SW16 4ER
0808 80 881 41
www.elderabuse.org.uk
aea@ace.org.uk

- **Domestic Violence Intervention Programme**
PO Box 2838, London, W6 9ZE
020 7633 9181
www.dvip.org.uk
- **Rape Crisis Federation (England and Wales)**
Telephone: 0808 802 9999
www.rapecrisis.org.uk
info@rapecrisis.co.uk
A referral service to individual women who are seeking advice and/or support around the issues of rape and sexual abuse/assault by putting them in contact with their nearest/local rape and sexual abuse counselling service.
- **Refuge (national domestic violence charity)**
0808 2000 247
www.refuge.org.uk

Support for Men:

- **Survivors UK**
0845 122 1201
www.survivorsuk.co.uk
Survivors is for men who have been sexually assaulted by anyone at any time of their life.

Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexuals and Transgender people:

- **SOLA – Survivors Of Lesbian Partnership Abuse**
Helpline: 020 7328 7389
solalondon@hotmail.com
London-based group SOLA offer support to women who have been abused by a female (ex)partner and raise awareness of this still very closeted issue. Group members, all survivors of lesbian abuse, run a national helpline and self-support groups.
- **Broken Rainbow Hotline**
0300 999 5428
www.lgbt-dv.org.uk
A reporting and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people experiencing domestic violence.

For more information please visit:

BBC Hitting Home Campaign – www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh - information, help and support for anyone affected by domestic violence

Nationwide Building Society,
Head Office, Nationwide House, Pipers Way, Swindon, Wiltshire SN38 1NW.

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