Housing for Women

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM · 25 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER 2026
HOUSING FOR WOMEN

Supporting employees affected by domestic abuse

A quick guide for HR, wellbeing teams and senior leaders



Why it matters

Domestic abuse doesn't stay at home. It follows people to work, and the workplace can be one of the few places where someone experiencing abuse is apart from the person harming them. You don't need to solve the problem. You need to make it safe for people to ask for help, and know where to send them.

It affects your organisation.

Home Office research estimated that domestic abuse resulted in approximately

£14 billion

in lost economic output in England and Wales in 2016–17, including time off work and reduced productivity.

Most staff don't know what help exists.

A CIPD survey found that only

24%

of UK employees were aware of their employer having a domestic abuse policy or support in place.

You are not expected to fix it. National guidance from the CIPD and the Equality and Human Rights Commission is clear: employers are not asked to solve the problem, but to help employees reach professional support.

Your five-minute check

Tick each one you can answer "yes" to today. Any gaps show you where to start.

- ☐ We have a domestic abuse policy, and staff know where to find it.
- ☐ Staff know where to get confidential help, inside and outside the organisation.
- ☐ Managers know how to respond if someone tells them they are experiencing abuse.
- ☐ We can offer practical support, such as flexible hours, time off or a change of work location.
- ☐ We know what to do if someone may be at risk at work, for example if an abuser turns up or contacts them at work.

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Where to start: five first steps

If you have little or nothing in place, these steps will make a real difference quickly. Most cost nothing.

1. **Name a lead.** Choose someone in HR or wellbeing to own this, with a senior leader to back them.
2. **Signpost help today.** Display our 16 Days poster, and add helpline numbers to your intranet, staff handbook and Employee Assistance Programme information.
3. **Join the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA).** Membership is free and gives you guidance, tools and resources from a network of over 2,000 employers.
4. **Write your policy.** You don't have to start from scratch. If your organisation needs guidance on developing a domestic abuse policy, get in touch with the Housing for Women team to explore how we may be able to support you.

   Email: manjeet.pabla@h4w.co.uk Telephone: 020 7501 6120
5. **Brief your managers.** Make sure they know the four Rs below and where to refer someone.

What good looks like

A good policy is developed with employees and any trade union or staff representatives, and sets out:

- a clear commitment to taking domestic abuse seriously
- the common signs of domestic abuse
- the support available, and how to ask for it confidentially
- who to contact, inside and outside the organisation

Practical support you can offer:

- flexible working hours, so someone can attend appointments or court, or move home
- Paid safe leave: Consider offering dedicated paid leave so employees affected by domestic abuse can access specialist support, attend appointments or make arrangements for their safety.
- a different place to work, if home or the usual workplace is not safe
- an agreed code word or hand signal so someone can alert colleagues that they need help
- safety measures at work, such as screening calls and emails, or changing shift patterns

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If someone tells you: the four Rs

Recognise

Abuse is often hidden. Look out for changes such as lateness, absence, withdrawal, anxiety, unexplained injuries, or a partner who calls or turns up often.

Respond

Find a private space. Listen, believe them and don't judge. Ask what they need and what would help.

Refer

Signpost to specialist help (see below). Agree practical support, and only share information with their consent, unless someone is at immediate risk.

Record

Keep information confidential and share it only where appropriate, with the person's consent wherever possible, or where disclosure is necessary for safeguarding or legal reasons. Follow your organisation's safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Don't confront the person causing harm, pressure someone to leave the relationship, or promise to keep everything secret if someone may be at risk. **If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999.**

For senior leaders

Staff take their cue from the top. Four commitments make the biggest difference:

1. **Say it out loud.** Tell staff, in your own words, that the organisation will support anyone affected by domestic abuse.
2. **Make it official.** Approve a policy and join EIDA.
3. **Fund it.** Give your lead the time and budget for paid safe leave and manager briefings.
4. **Check it's working.** Once a year, ask whether staff know where to get help, and act on the answer.

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Where to get help

For employees

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247 – Free, confidential support, 24 hours a day.

In an emergency, call **999**.

For employers (all free)

- **Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA)**: membership, toolkits and training
- **CIPD and EHRC guide**: managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse
- **Acas guidance** on supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse

Housing for Women – Workplace Support Enquiries

For guidance on developing your organisation's approach to supporting employees affected by domestic abuse, please get in touch to explore how we may be able to support you.

Email: manjeet.pabla@h4w.co.uk Telephone: 020 7501 6120

Tell us what would help.

We'd love to hear what support would be most useful to your organisation as you build your response. Contact **Manjeet Pabla at manjeet.pabla@h4w.co.uk**



Sources

Home Office (2019), The economic and social costs of domestic abuse · CIPD (2020), survey of UK employees (YouGov, June 2020) · CIPD and EHRC (2020), Managing and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse · Acas, guidance for employers on domestic abuse

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