

Domestic Abuse Support Further Information for Line Managers

INTRODUCTION

Domestic Violence and Abuse are some of the more pervasive crimes in our society. The harm resulting from Domestic Violence and Abuse can have a lasting impact on victims and their families and preventative action to reduce the number of incidents remains a priority for the Council.

An individual who is experiencing Domestic Abuse may choose to seek advice or support from several sources, including their immediate manager or another member of direct line management or a trade union representative. If approached, managers need to be prepared to listen, to be sensitive and non-judgemental in order that the most appropriate help can be offered.

FACTS

- Domestic Abuse affects 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men at some point during their lifetime
- 1 in 5 children have been exposed to Domestic Abuse
- 2 women are killed every week and 1 man every second week
- 75% of victims are targeted at their workplace
- Under 25s are most likely to experience Domestic Abuse
- Victims are more likely to be disabled, BAME or from low income groups
- 90% of high-risk cases are female

IF A VICTIM IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER CALL 999 AND ASK FOR THE POLICE

IDENTIFICATION AND DISCLOSURE

People experiencing Domestic Abuse may feel stigmatised and disempowered. They often do not want to admit or share their experience because they may feel some responsibility for the situation, they may feel shame, or that they should be able to deal with the situation on their own. There can also be fears that they will not be believed, their experiences will be trivialised, they will cause trouble for the perpetrator, or that there might be a negative outcome for their children.

Identifying that an employee is experiencing difficulties at an early stage can help ensure that appropriate support is provided and help the employee to deal with their situation more effectively. This can reduce repeated work absences and can ultimately reduce the extent of the domestic abuse experienced.

Domestic abuse may be identified through monitoring absence and putting together other potential indicators. Some of the indicators could be:

- Uncharacteristically depressed, anxious, distracted, lacking in concentration, self-confidence, or self-esteem
- Changes in the quality of work for no apparent reason
- Receiving repeated upsetting telephone calls/texts/emails
- Increased absenteeism or lateness and/or with unusual explanations
- Repeatedly requiring time off for appointments
- Regular illness/recurring illnesses
- Excessive clothing
- Repeated injuries or unexplained bruising
- Unusual use of alcohol or other substances
- Obsession with time
- Avoiding lunch breaks or socialising outside work
- Nervous on arrival and when leaving work
- Reluctance to leave work at the end of the working day
- Isolating themselves at work

If a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing Domestic Abuse, they should find a quiet private space and begin by facilitating a conversation to discuss the issue on a general level in order to identify and implement appropriate support.

Ask open and indirect questions, to establish an empathetic relationship with the employee. Be patient and offer support to encourage disclosure.

Avoid blaming the person experiencing domestic abuse. It is important that managers are able to provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

Respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential. It is also important to work on the basis of believing the employee so that they feel supported.

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Below are some examples of questions and prompts that could be used:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted/upset at the moment – Are you ok?
- If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you.
- Is everything all right at home?
- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready.
- What support do you think might help?
- What would you like to happen? How?

If someone chooses to disclose to you that they are living with Domestic Abuse, accept that the facts may be complicated, and emotions may be running high.

Allow the person to share their story if they want to, but do not lead the conversation or make assumptions.

Appreciate that the person may feel they are taking an enormous risk in doing so and be mindful of the effort that is involved on their part.

Treat the disclosure and the person with respect and be attentive to the words and the feelings they convey, and the outcome they want from the conversation.

Don't think you or they can deal with this alone. Ask the person what they think would help and how you can help in achieving that.

If there are immediate risks or children who may be at risk, you will need to support them to contact the Police or contact them directly yourself.

Remember that many victims manage to work and take care of their children at the same time as living with an abuser and this shows remarkable resilience and strength.

It must also be remembered that these individuals have clearly been let down: the person who is supposed to love them is in fact abusing them and so understandably victims may be fearful and anxious.

Your response, body language, approach and language will be key in them deciding whether you are or are not a person they can trust. Try to develop trust by listening carefully and taking the case seriously, not engaging in harmful gossip about the situation, and being discrete. Supporting the victim in a meaningful way will depend on the facts of the case, the Council's Policy Statement, and ability to offer practical support as outlined above.

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MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

Domestic Abuse is obviously a sensitive subject and an employee who comes forward may have never told anyone before.

It is therefore critical to maintain confidentiality. A breach in this could mean that future victims do not have the confidence to come forward.

Confidentiality is the agreement that you will not share what the employee has said or any of their details unless absolutely necessary. This may be if they are at immediate risk of harm or a child is in harm's way.

If they are not in immediate physical danger information should only be shared if the employee agrees to it.

The role of a manager is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear through a workplace policy/guidance that employees will be supported and to outline what help is available.

RISK ASSESSMENT & SAFETY PLAN

The Council has a duty of care and health and safety legislation ensures that employees have the right to work in a safe environment where risks to health and well-being are considered and dealt with safely and efficiently.

The dangers of domestic abuse should not be underestimated.

If domestic abuse is disclosed, undertaking a risk assessment can ensure that the potential risk to staff and colleagues is reduced. It is also important to recognise that, for some, the workplace can be a safe-haven and provide a route to safety.

Within the council there are a number of Domestic Abuse Champions who have received additional training in the use of the nationally recognised Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Assessment, commonly known as the DASH.

The manager who has received the disclosure should either provide a list of Champions to the employee or if they have received training, undertake the DASH.

The Manager or Champion will ask the employee questions related to the risk factors and will then work with the victim and the employer to manage that risk.

On completion of a DASH risk assessment the victim/survivor will be asked if they want to be referred to Victim Support for further support and the checklist shared with them.

If the victim/survivor wishes to be referred, Victim Support will complete further risk assessments and safety planning and the employee's Line Manager will actively participate and support this wherever possible.

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It is expected that the Line Manager will implement any recommendations from the Safety Plan to ensure the employee's safety at work.

In cases where an employee is considered to be a high or very high-risk victim then it is likely that they will be referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARACs are weekly multiagency meetings that aim to increase the protection of high-risk victims of domestic violence through a broad range of supportive interventions.

HOW DO I SIGNPOST SOMEONE?

The Domestic Abuse Champions have knowledge of support services available within Cumbria and can help find local options.

If you require support, you can find a list of Champions at:

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/employeeinformation/wellbeing/healthadvocates.asp>

Please provide the employee with the link to the DA Champions and make them aware of other services available. It should be their choice who to contact and when.

Victim Support is available over the phone at 0300 3030157 and has an online chat feature on their website. They have a good overall view of support available and can conduct risk assessments and safety planning.

<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/north-west/cumbria>

You can find a list of other services available as an appendix.

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WHAT DO I DO IF AN EMPLOYEE NEEDS TIME OFF?


On average a victim of Domestic Abuse tries to flee the home 3-4 times before they are successful. It is therefore recognised that your employees may need time off to attend to the implications of this. It may be to flee, seek support or attend court.

Cumbria County Council has agreed to the use of Compassionate Leave specifically for Domestic Abuse Support.

To log and approve this on iTrent:

Enter absence type as Paid Leave and absence reason as Urgent Domestic – Compassionate and Save.

Absence

Absence type  Paid Leave  ☐ Set as default

Absence reason Urgent Domestic - Compassionate 

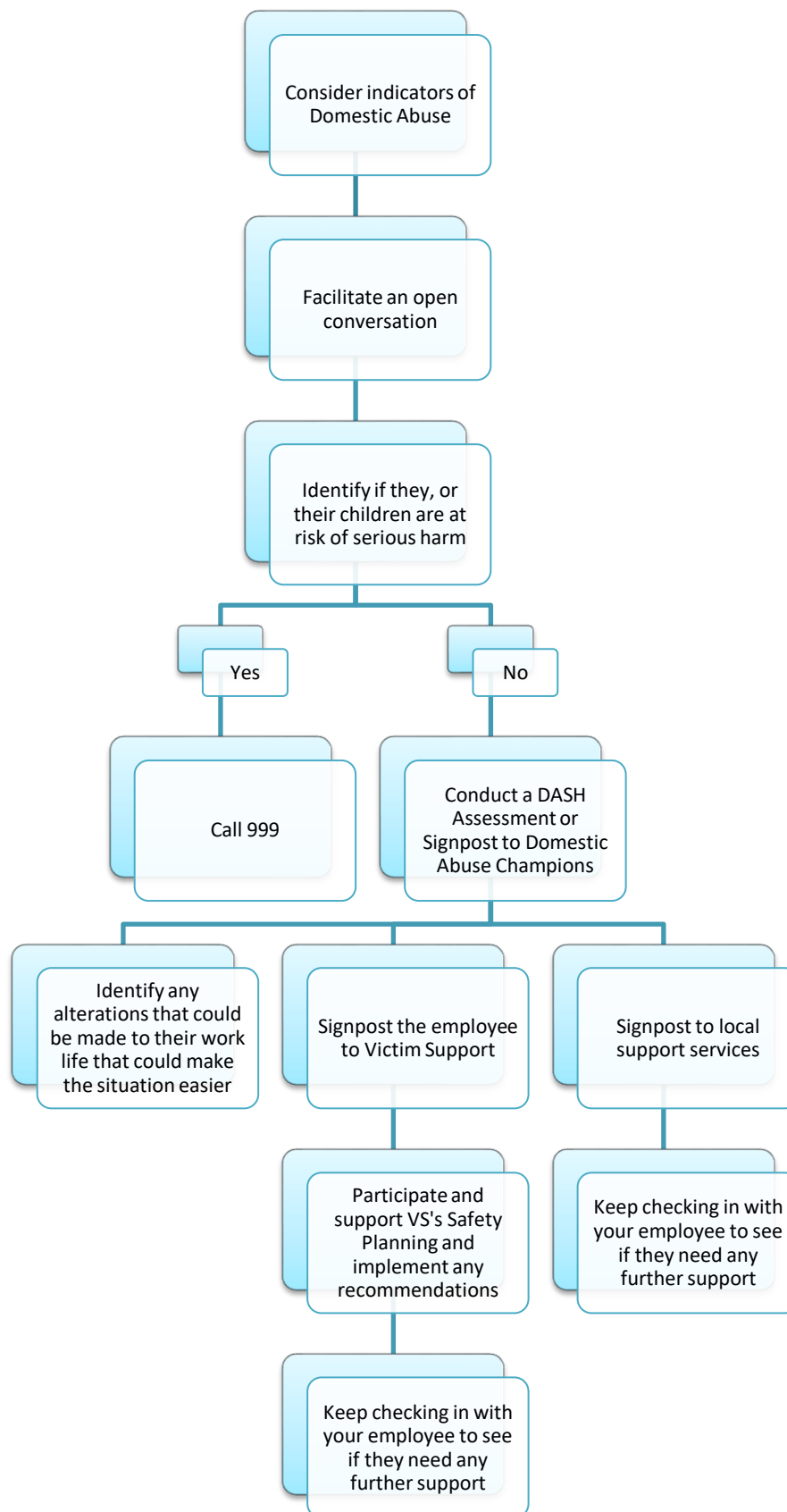
Hide absence reason ☐

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AN EMPLOYEE TELLS ME ABOUT AN INCIDENT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE...

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find somewhere private to talk • Ask open questions • Accept what they say • Keep calm • Listen more than talk • Assure them of confidentiality but not secrecy • Undertake a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Assessment (DASH) • Conduct safety planning • Make them aware of support available • Signpost to DA Champions or specialist services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be flippant, cynical or sceptical • Ask leading questions • Justify the perpetrator's actions • Try to "fix" the issue • Make assumptions • Tell the perpetrator about the allegation • Take the role of counsellor

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APPENDIX

EMERGENCY HOUSING

Allerdale – DA Partnership Support (Housing) 01900 702584
Barrow – DA Partnership Support (Housing) 01229 876599 or 01229 311102
Copeland – DA Partnership Support (Housing) 01946 598475 or 07776151831
Carlisle – DA Partnership Support (Housing) - 01228 817079
Eden – DA Partnership Support (Housing) 01768 861414
South Lakeland – DA Partnership Support (Housing) - 01539 73333

LOCAL SERVICES

Safety Net 0122 8515859 or 07748 682 600

Domestic Abuse Trauma informed Counselling and Support services. Safety Net will provide weekly trauma informed therapeutic or support sessions and have practical and emotional support in place. The service will also provide advice and signpost where necessary.

Gateway 4 Women 01228 212090

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Drop-in Centre, web updates, one to one telephone referrals, assessments and sessions.

Women Out West (Whitehaven) 01946 550103

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Drop-in Centre, web updates, one to one telephone referrals, assessments and sessions.

Women Community Matters (Barrow) 01229 311102

Domestic Abuse and Health and Wellbeing Services. Currently support is being provided via telephone calls and email only. The sessions being offered include: My Relationships & Me, Time for Thought, Pause for Thought and Petals.

The Freedom Project – 07712117986

Provides Domestic Abuse Counselling and Trauma Support Services.

Victim Support 0300 3030 157 or 08081689111

Victim Support provides support to domestic abuse victims who are at all risk levels of abuse.

Birchall Trust 01229 820828

Counselling Survivors of Rape and Sexual Abuse.

Bridgeway/SARC 0808 118 6432

The Bridgeway Sexual Assault Support Services provide advice and online resources to help offer the right support and advice to service users who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

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Springfield DA Refuge and Outreach 01539 720313 or 07946 101820
Accommodation and outreach support programmes

NATIONAL SERVICES

National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247
The helpline is run by Refuge and a live online chat is also available.

Women's Aid <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>
Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. They provide local support services, training for organisations and information if you are worried about someone else. They also have a live chat facility.

Rape Crisis 0808 802 9999
They have a network of independent Rape Crisis centres that provide specialist support and services for victims and survivors of sexual violence. They have a National Rape Crisis Helpline and a live chat.

Rights of Women 02072516575
Provides advice to women on family, criminal and immigration law issues. Different phone lines for family, criminal and immigration law issues are listed here.

Jewish Women's Aid 0800 591203
Jewish Women's Aid supports Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Women with learning difficulties: 020 8522 0675

Southall Black Sisters 020 8571 9595
Advice and information on domestic abuse, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African and African-Caribbean women.

Muslim Women's Helpline: 020 8904 8193 or 020 8908 6715
The Muslim Women's Helpline aims to provide any Muslim girl or woman in a crisis with a free, confidential listening service and referral to Islamic consultants, plus practical help and information where required.

Asian Women's Resource Centre 020 8961 6549
The Asian Women's Resource Centre provides a domestic violence and advocacy service. They provide support to women in need in the following languages: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Hinko, Konkani, Marathi, Pashto, Patwari, Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Kurdish, Turkish and Azerbaijani. They also offer support services around housing, welfare benefits, debt (signposting) and employment, as well as running immigration surgeries for those in need of specialist immigration advice.

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IKWRO: Women's rights organisation 020 7920 6460

Specialist advice and help to Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls who are at risk of 'honour' based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic violence.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on forced marriages: 020 7008 0151

Galop 0800 999 5428

Galop, the LGBT+ anti-violence charity, provides hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence support services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans+ victims/survivors by telephone, email, text and WhatsApp.

Respect phoneline 0808 802 4040

An anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. Concerned friends or family members and front-line workers assisting abusers can also call for information and support.

ManKind Initiative 01823 334 244

A national charity that provides help and support for male survivors of domestic abuse and domestic violence.

Respect Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327; a webchat is available at certain times

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them.

Samaritans 116 123

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