

Respectful relationships

*'This is everyone's responsibility.
Let's stop domestic abuse now.'*

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HM Govt 'Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan' March 2022

Dear Public Sector Leaders Colleagues,

Firstly, thank you for what you do every day and for taking the time to read this. We are a group of cross-sector public sector leaders and we have created this resource as part of the national collaborative leadership programme.

As leaders we have a shared recognition of the harm caused by domestic abuse. We are also struck by the relative paucity of preventative, upstream interventions that targets potential perpetrators of abuse - especially when compared with the prevalence of upstream interventions that target potential victims.

We explored the reasons for this gap with Domestic Abuse specialists, including the charity Safe Lives. We understand that while it can be very empowering and positive to better equip potential victims of abuse, it is very negative and stigmatizing to effectively identify someone as a potential perpetrator of domestic abuse. Additionally, many upstream interventions that target potential victims draw on survivors of abuse to share their experience. This is much harder to replicate with perpetrators of abuse.

These differences are also very gendered. The majority of victims of domestic abuse are women and a strong majority of prosecuted perpetrators are male

The consequences of this are that there are many upstream interventions that target women and girls as potential victims, but very little evidence of successful upstream intervention that target men and boys as potential perpetrators.

We believe that there is scope to "de-gender" upstream interventions by focusing more on **respectful relationships** – a broader focus that recognizes that domestic abuse is just one potential consequence of the absence of respectful relationships.

We also believe there is scope to share current practice that will allow leaders to:

- Draw on existing established resources to build interventions to support respectful relationships in our workplace
- Articulate the case for addressing and responding specifically to domestic abuse in the workplace
- Draw on existing examples of successful workplace based responses to domestic abuse that can be adopted by our organisations

This is summarised in our two-page leaders guide – **Respectful relationship- things to think about?**

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What is the impact of domestic abuse?	Domestic abuse devastates lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2019-20 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated 2.3 million people experienced domestic abuse in the previous year, and over two thirds of victims are women.• 92% of defendants in domestic abuse related prosecutions are male (ONS 2021).• Lockdown left victims and survivors more vulnerable than ever, as they spent more time at home with abusers.• Domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of violence against women and girls. Around one in five homicides are related to domestic abuse and there were 39 victim suicides following domestic abuse in the year to 31 March 2021. HM Govt 2022
What is coercive control?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The official government definition of domestic abuse is: “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.”• This statutory definition comes from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and emphasises that domestic abuse can be emotional, coercive, controlling or economic, and need not only mean physical violence.• Womensaid defines coercive control as ‘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.’• There were 33,954 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021.• Coercive control is a pernicious form of domestic abuse, where victims can be trapped in hostage-like situations. Over time the coercive controlling behaviour erodes the victim’s sense of self, confidence, self-esteem, agency and autonomy (Coercive Control - Wales Safer Communities).

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<p>Why is this your responsibility?</p>	<p>For many of your staff the home is now the workplace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support in the workplace is a key part of the Government's Domestic Abuse plan which calls for the whole of society to tackle domestic abuse HM Govt 2022.• Challenging poor attitudes towards relationship behaviours may help to prevent domestic abuse.• Employers have a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment, and they have a duty of care to employees. The increase in hybrid working means the role of the employer in tackling abuse has never been so crucial• The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) state that lockdown has meant businesses must look again at how they support their staff; revisit where the boundary between home and work is; and put new ways of working in place to fulfil their duty of care as employers.• Having a workplace policy and guidance on respectful relationships and domestic abuse sends a clear message that abusive behaviour is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace, that the employer is able to support any staff member who needs help.• By instigating conversations and creating a transparent open environment in which to discuss relationships, affected employees will hopefully feel supported enough to acknowledge to themselves or their employer that their relationships are abusive or coercive.
<p>What is the likely impact of domestic abuse on your organisation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic abuse is not a single time-limited event.• The average length of abuse is three years, during which a number of offences may repeatedly occur.• Staff may previously have seen the office as a safe space, but with the rise of hybrid and home working the role of the office as refuge will have dwindled.• Research by Vodafone and KPMG found that the potential loss of earnings per female victim of abuse is £5,800 each year, stemming from the negative impacts on career progression.• The cost to the economy is also considerable, with an estimated £14 billion arising from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity (Home Office 2019).•

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Table 11: Discounted estimates of the average time lost at work during an average domestic abuse period, by domestic abuse type

Domestic abuse type	Average time lost at work (hours)
Domestic homicide	16,228
Violence with injury	14
Violence without injury	2
Rape	349
Indecent exposure and/or sexual touching	35
Stalking	1

Table 12: Discounted hours of lost output as a result of reduced productivity w returning to work after a crime

Domestic abuse type	Reduced productivity after return to work
Violence with injury	835
Violence without injury	353
Rape	552
Indecent exposure and/or sexual touching	141
Stalking	345

[\(Home Office 2019\).](#)

Resources on respectful relationships

- [Workplace Culture - Toward a Respectful Workplace \(msu.edu\)](#)
- [Managing Relationships and Work - OpenLearn - Open University](#)
- [Discrimination, bullying and harassment | Acas](#)
- [Help with relationships and marriage – counselling and advice | Relate](#)
- [Difficult work relations - Mind](#)
- [Healthy and unhealthy relationships | Childline](#)

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How have other organisations have addressed this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In June 2020, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) launched a review and published the Workplace Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse Report which includes best practice case studies and prompts to help those experiencing domestic abuse.• The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) is a growing network of large and small businesses supporting employers to take action on domestic abuse. Membership is free and EIDA provides practical guidance, up to date tools and materials, as well as signposting to support services for employers. The EIDA toolkit for employers
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First steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you considered extending your Domestic Abuse policy to staff?• EIDA suggest you appoint a senior HR person who can lead your organisation's response to domestic abuse• EIDA provides a legally endorsed template policy for organisations to amend as required.
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