

The BAWP guide to

# Domestic Violence



**+** women's aid  
and women & children are safe



**Domestic violence has a devastating impact on the lives of thousands of people, mainly women and children, with some research stating that as many as one in four women may experience domestic violence in their lifetime.**

These statistics show that all organisations – including the police service – have employees who are either at risk from, are affected by, or perpetrate domestic violence.

It is acknowledged that because of the nature of this crime many incidents of domestic violence are unreported, and individuals working for the police service may be especially reluctant to seek help because of the job they do.

But all victims should get the help, support and protection they need.

This leaflet gives some broad advice to managers and supervisors if they are concerned about a member of their staff, and also provides information and useful contacts for individuals who are suffering domestic violence.

It is in no way an exhaustive reference document, however it must be stressed there are many organisations who can provide specialist advice and help.

One such organisation is Women's Aid, a national charity which works in partnership with the police, national and local government departments, courts, social services, housing, health care services and other statutory and voluntary organisations to provide an integrated approach to domestic violence.

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In general the workplace should be seen as a place that victims of domestic violence can access help and support – and this should be equally true for people working in the police service.

Some forces already have policies in place regarding domestic violence issues involving members of staff, and details of these should be available through human resources departments.

# So what is domestic violence?

**Although officers and police staff deal regularly with cases of domestic violence, it is worth outlining what that term can cover. It is a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour which as well as physical and sexual abuse, also includes psychological and financial abuse, within the context of an intimate relationship.**

## What can managers do?

**Managers may be the first to become aware that an employee is experiencing domestic violence because they have the role of monitoring and investigating sickness, attendance and work performance.**

Some indicators to consider include members of staff:

- being uncharacteristically late or a high absenteeism rate without explanation
- wearing inappropriate or excessive clothing
- having repeated injuries, unexplained bruising or explanations that don't fit the injuries
- being uncharacteristically depressed, anxious, distracted or having trouble concentrating
- showing changes in quality of work performance for no apparent reason
- receiving repeated upsetting calls, faxes or e-mails or being a victim of vandalism or threats
- being obsessed with time, avoiding lunch

breaks or socialising outside work

However, effects of domestic violence will vary amongst women and these indicators alone should not be used to identify whether or not someone has been abused.

If domestic violence is suspected, any discussion about the employee's situation should take place in privacy. Any direct questions should be asked with care and sensitivity. Indirect, non-threatening questions could include:

- How are you feeling?
- Is everything all right at home?
- Are you getting support at home?
- I noticed the bruising...are you being hurt by someone you know?

As far as possible, information should not be divulged about individual employees without their permission, and even with this consent, consider carefully how much information needs to be disclosed.

Psychological abuse can mean constant criticism, bullying, using intimidation and coercion such as threats to kill, threats to harm children or family members, destroying possessions, being kept isolated from family or friends, being locked in, not being allowed access to food, sleep or freedom.

Financial abuse can include being denied

access to money or not knowing about the family income, being made to ask for an allowance, an income being taken away and being prevented from getting or keeping a job.

Common to all domestic violence is the exercise of power and control over another person, and the abuse tends to escalate in frequency and severity over time.

*If domestic violence is suspected, any discussion about the employee's situation should take place in privacy.*

Managers' responsibilities should include:

- Creating an environment where people feel safe and comfortable talking about domestic violence, by ensuring staff have regular access to information such as newsletters, articles, posters and leaflets on this issue
- Participating in domestic violence training and being aware of physical, behavioural and/or performance changes
- Believing an individual, taking the time to listen to what they are saying, and ensuring that any discussion takes place in private
- Providing a sensitive, non-judgemental response, which includes messages such as the person is not alone, nor to blame, that they do not deserve to be treated this way and that there is help available

- Keeping the information confidential, telling only those who need to know, with the individual's permission
- Being aware that there may be additional issues facing the individual because of their ethnic background, age, sexuality or disability
- Knowing about support options available and discussing these with the member of staff
- Respecting the choices and decisions a person makes about the relationship, even if they disagree with it. It is often difficult to leave a relationship because of financial and childcare responsibilities, or ongoing threats of violence, and individuals may make numerous attempts before they are finally able to leave their abusive partner
- Working with employees to adjust their work patterns to help resolve practicalities, for example, to attend solicitor's meetings, making financial arrangements or finding alternative schooling
- Ensure communication is maintained with a member of staff during any absence, whilst remembering to maintain confidentiality of their whereabouts

# What can individuals experiencing domestic violence do?

- Admit you are experiencing domestic violence. Remember you are not alone. There are many people who have had similar experiences, and there are agencies who can listen and who want to help
- Talk to someone who has experience of listening and offering support. Contact, in confidence, a local or national domestic violence helpline or agency, such as Women's Aid (see 'useful contacts' at the back of this leaflet)
- Talk to a trusted colleague or manager and ask for help, or contact your Human Resources department in confidence to find out about the options open to you, the help available and the support you can be offered
- Consider whether you need to notify your supervisor or manager of the possible need to be absent from work, in confidence. Discuss your leave options and possible alternative work arrangements
- If you need to have some time off work, let your manager know and develop a plan to return to work. Maintain communications with your manager during your absence.
- If necessary, make alternative arrangements for receiving your salary

# Useful information and contact details

**Women's Aid can provide information, training and resources for women and children experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse in their homes.**

Their website at [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) contains a range of information, leaflets and links to many local, national and specialist organisations providing support for domestic violence related issues.

Women's Aid also run an additional website for children and young people at [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk) – to inform about domestic violence, to help them identify whether it is happening in their home, to provide indirect and informal support to children and young people living with domestic violence or to those who may want to help a friend, and to signpost additional help and direct support.

Women's Aid and Refuge are working in partnership to provide a Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247. All calls are taken in the strictest confidence. You do not have to be in an emergency situation to call this number. The helpline will provide access to round the clock emergency refuge accommodation as well as an information service and translation facilities.

For more information on BAWP visit [www.bawp.org](http://www.bawp.org)

*BAWP would like to thank Women's Aid Federation of England for their help in producing this leaflet.*