



Isle of Man
Government

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MANAGING AND SUPPORTING STAFF EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Office of Human Resources

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to maximise the safety and the wellbeing of all employees and to ensure that anyone experiencing domestic abuse, of any sort, feels safe if they choose to disclose information, feels believed and is fully supported throughout.

2. AWARENESS AND STATISTICS

- 2.1 The IOM Government recognises that its employees will be among those affected by domestic abuse (DA); e.g. a survivor of DA, an individual who is currently living with DA, someone who has impacted upon by DA or an individual who perpetrates DA.
- 2.2 Research by The Equality and Human Rights Commission suggests that 75% of those experiencing domestic abuse are targeted at work e.g. abusive phone calls, abusive partners turning up unannounced at the workplace or physical assaults.
- 2.3 The IOM Government is committed to developing a workplace culture where there is zero tolerance for abuse and that recognises that the responsibility for DA lies solely with the perpetrator.
- 2.4 By developing effective domestic abuse guidance and working to reduce the risks related to DA, we will create a safer workplace and we will also be sending out a strong message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.
- 2.5 In the 12 months between 1st March 2020 and 28 February 2021, 64 Victim Support clients made between them a total of 145 GP visits and were in contact with police 151 times, during that 12 months. Each of these contacts represents a potential missed opportunity to identify domestic abuse as a factor. The average length of time the abuse had been happening in these instances was 57.5 months.
- 2.6 The data though, can only give an indication of those which have reached the various authorities. Given the length of time before help was sought as indicated in Victim Support's data many more will have not been reported or recorded.
- 2.7 Latest available figures show that 22% of Motiv8's caseload disclose being victims of Domestic Abuse

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 The document is designed as a resource and source of information to all persons working in any Department, Board of Office, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, casual, agency worker, volunteer or consultant. It should be used to help support and signpost an individual or any colleague who is, or has been, impacted by domestic abuse.

4. REFERENCES

[CIPD Managing and Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse – A guide for employers](#)
[Domestic Abuse Act 2020](#)
[Equality and Human Rights Commission – Domestic Abuse: Workplace Policies and managing and Supporting Employees](#)
[Public Health England, Business in the Community – Domestic Abuse – a toolkit for employers](#)

5. RESOURCES

[Vodafone – Toolkit on Domestic Violence and Abuse at Work](#)
[Workplace Wellbeing Toolkit](#)
[People Strategy](#)
[See, Say, Support Signpost](#)
[Mental Health Pledge](#)
[Flexible Leave](#)
[Management of Sickness Absence Policy](#)
[Special Leave Policy](#)
[Equal Opportunities Policy](#)
[Healthy & Well site](#)
[Supporting Staff Through Trauma](#)
[Prevention and Management of Workplace Stress](#)

6. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 6.1 IOM Government is committed to developing a workplace culture in which any employee who is experiencing domestic abuse feels comfortable and is safe to raise this within their workplace in the knowledge that they will be provided with effective support and signposted to appropriate sources of help.
- 6.2 As a good employer, we will create a safer and more proactive workplace sending a strong message to all, that domestic abuse, of any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated within Government or any of its workplaces.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY

- 7.1 Any employee who discloses experiencing abuse will be assured any information they share will remain confidential unless there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where there is a duty of care which requires action to protect the safety of employees or member of the public.
- 7.2 If you believe information relating to a criminal act has been disclosed or if information shared raises concerns relating to safeguarding or the safety of others you must take specialist advice.

8. DEFINING DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 8.1 It is important to remember that domestic abuse is not only physical violence and that anyone can be a victim regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. The most prevalent type of abuse occurs in an intimate relationship, but the definition of domestic abuse also covers abuse between family members, such as adolescent to parent violence and abuse.

- 8.2 The IOM Constabulary definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between any persons aged 16 or over who are, or who have previously been in a relationship, are intimate partners, or who are family members; regardless of gender or sexuality.

- 8.3 The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:-

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Economic or Financial Abuse
- Emotional or Psychological Abuse (including Verbal Abuse)
- Stalking and Harassment

- Abuse via Telecommunications (including Telephone and Online)

8.4 Within the IOM Domestic Violence Act 2020 domestic abusive is defined as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

8.5 Coercive control underpins all the above forms of abuse and an understanding of coercive control is fundamental to any support offered.

8.6 Abusive behaviour also includes periods of apologies, promises to change, and gifts, it is by changing abusive techniques that an abusive person keeps their partner permanently on edge and in fear.

8.7 Domestic abuse does not usually end when the relationship ends.

9. IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE SIGNS

9.1 There are not always obvious signs that someone is experiencing domestic abuse. The key for line managers is to create an open and supportive atmosphere in which any employee feels comfortable about discussing *any* matters impacting them and never assume what may be happening.

9.2 Managers should be equipped to have the confidence to ask if everything is OK, providing opportunities for people to disclose. No assumptions should be made about what the problem is, but opportunities for the individual to express what is happening should be provided.

9.3 Some signs that domestic abuse *may* be affecting an individual are:-

Change in behaviour:

- Noticeable change to usual demeanour
- Strong reaction to calls, text or e-mails
- Conduct or behaviour out of character or extreme
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Avoiding work social activities (if previously participated)
- Reluctance to discuss home life; body language when home life or partner mentioned
- Avoiding windows or no longer using main entrance
- Waiting for someone else to leave with them rather than leaving the building alone
- Seeming "jumpy" or hyper vigilant

Physical/appearance changes:

- Visible bruising or injury
- Unexplained injuries or inconsistent explanations for injuries
- Vague non-specific medical complaints
- Changes in way of dressing
- Clothing not suitable for weather – this could be to hide injuries
- Often presenting as tired or fatigued at work

- Significant weight loss or gain
- Increased amount of make up

Work performance:

- A decline in productivity or increased errors
- Missing deadlines without obvious reason
- Standard of work deteriorating
- Increase personal e-mail, phone use.
- Distractible/loss of focus

Time keeping/working patterns/attendance:

- Frequent absences
- Frequent short notice leave requests
- Frequently late for work
- Arriving and leaving at irregular or unexpected times. (As lots of us have all started to work more flexibly this may not be as noticeable as it is when working regular hours).
- Spending more time at work.
- Reluctance to go home or obsessive about leaving on time

Other signs:

- Partner frequently visiting workplace or hanging around workplace
- Partner always escorting to and collecting from work
- Partner frequently phoning or texting the individual at work.
- Partner phoning or otherwise contacting the individual's managers and colleagues to make comments/complaints about the individual
- If homeworking, camera always off during video calls or partner frequently/always present in background.
- Partner appearing extremely attentive – e.g. Frequent flowers delivered (note recipient's reaction)
- A new relationship that appears to have moved very fast
- Substance misuse
- Appearing more isolated from friends & family
- Dropping activities/hobbies previously enjoyed
- Becoming withdrawn
- Increased or new onset anxiety
- Increased or new onset mental health concerns e.g. depression
- Unexpected resignation
- Impact on colleagues – increase to their workload/covering for colleague/potential risk to their safety, reduction to their productivity and morale; resentment against the person experiencing abuse who is not performing well. Domestic abuse experienced by one employee is likely to impact the whole team.

9.4 Remember though, all of these indicators could be as a result of a number of other factors. Explore the issues and do not make assumptions.

10. RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

10.1 If you identify a member of staff who is possibly experiencing domestic abuse, it is important not to take on the role of counsellor but rather to ensure you know the ways to signpost them to the best sources of help and support.

10.2 You can use the [See Say Support Signpost](#) model as a starting point.

- 10.3 It is important that you provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment, respecting the employee's boundaries and privacy is essential.
- 10.4 Never simply advise someone to leave the relationship.
- 10.5 In extreme instances there is a potential risk of life threatening or fatal abuse that can occur should they attempt to leave or have recently left an abusive or violent partner.
- 10.6 Open up a conversation, as you would if you had any concerns about a member of your team. Some good conversation starters are:-
- How are things at the moment?
 - You don't seem to be yourself – are you OK?
 - You seem distracted/upset is there anything you would like to talk about?
 - How are things at home?
 - I have noticed (*any indication e.g. examples above you have noticed*), could you use some support?
 - I appreciate you may not want to tell me anything at the moment, but please remember I am here to support you or if you feel more comfortable speaking with someone else, I can help with that.
- 10.7 If a member of staff does disclose an issue related to domestic abuse, do not assume what action needs to be taken. It is important that whilst you can offer support and provide information, any actions taken are with the agreement of the individual, and you respect their choices.
- 10.8 Some possible positive actions you can discuss to support and keep them safe within the workplace include, but are not limited to:
- Ask the individual what measures would help them at work
 - Consider offering a flexible working schedule
 - Changes to specific duties to keep them safe e.g. away from customer facing
 - Diverting phone
 - Ensuring employee is not working alone in remote locations
 - Consider car parking arrangements to avoid walking alone to their car
 - Review arrangements for visitors to place of work
 - Ensure emergency contact details are up to date
 - If using more remote/home working, consider the possible impact of this
 - Consider change of desk location e.g. away from windows to reduce visibility
 - Take a flexible approach to allow for appointments e.g. solicitors, staff welfare, police, housing.
 - Agree what information to share with other colleagues
 - Consider use of code word or signal for use in video calls if they feel they are in danger
 - Consider (with consent) sharing information with reception or security staff. Particularly if there is a DA Protection Notice or Order in place.
 - Keep a record of any abusive incidents in the workplace, including emails, phone calls, threats or visits to the employee.
- 10.9 Specialist advice and safety planning is available from Police or Victim Support

11. PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 11.1 Domestic abuse perpetrated by employee will not be condoned under any circumstances.

- 11.2 Appropriate measures will be taken to address comments, actions or behaviours which breach either the Public Service Code of Conduct, employment terms and conditions, professional standards or relevant values or behaviours. This may include disciplinary procedures.
- 11.3 Any member of staff who discloses perpetrating domestic abuse will be provided with information and support services available to them.
- 11.4 Any criminal charge or conviction relating to domestic abuse will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

12.SIGNPOSTING - CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION & SUPPORT

- **Children & Family Services – Telephone 686179**
E-mail childcarereferrals.dsc@gov.im
If you are worried about a child experiencing domestic abuse
- **Counselling & Therapies Service – Telephone 642540**
Referral to the service is usually via G.P., although individuals can also self-refer. The service is for people aged 16 and over experiencing mild to moderate common mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and trauma.
- **Crisis Response & Home Treatment Team – Telephone 642860**
The CRHTT provide an Island wide crisis response service for people who are experiencing significant deterioration in their mental health and/or an increase in their psychological distress which requires an **urgent response to facilitate a resolution of crisis.**
- **Domestic Abuse Officer (Isle of Man Constabulary) – 01624 631495**
If you are not in an urgent situation, but would like some advice and/or support in relation to Domestic Abuse, current or historic, then you can contact the Domestic Abuse Officer direct.
- **Domestic Abuse Worker (Children’s Centre) – 01624 800000**
The Children’s Centre is an independent charity undertaking their own projects and working with others to provide a variety of community initiatives and services to enable children, young people and families reach their full potential
- **Drug and Alcohol Team - Telephone 687347**
Government agency providing information, advice, support and counselling with regards to drug and alcohol problems.
- **Housing Matters – Telephone 675507**
A registered charity providing advice, guidance and support to local families and individuals in housing crisis.
- **Isle Listen – 679118**
A charitable initiative that provides support and training in schools, the workplace and community, helping people to recognise that mental health is just as important as physical health
- **Motiv8 – Telephone 627656**
Formerly the IOM Alcohol Advisory Service. The team of highly qualified and experienced counsellors specialise in addictive behaviours.

- **National Domestic Abuse 24hr Helpline – Telephone 0808 2000 247**
Free and confidential 24 hr helpline with highly trained female advisors who won't judge or tell you what to do.
- **Occupational Health Service- Telephone: 642150**
The Occupational Health Service aims to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all staff. The service is impartial, non-judgemental, and confidential, and can give advice and/or support for managers and their staff who may be experiencing indirect or direct, work related health problems in the workplace. Access to the service can be through agency, management, or self-referral. An answer phone for confidential messages is in operation when the department is closed.
- **Office of Human Resources – Telephone 685000**
The Office of Human Resources sits within the Cabinet Office. Our principal customers are the people who work across Government. We provide leadership for Government's HR community and supply managers and individual job holders with a range of support, management information and advice services covering all aspects of employment.
- **Samaritans IOM - Telephone 116123**
Samaritans will listen. No judgement, no pressure, and help you work through what's on your mind. They will never tell you what to do.
- **Staff Welfare Service - Telephone 687027 Email staffwelfare@gov.im**
Offers a confidential service, within the requirements of the law, offering emotional support, counselling and sign-posting for all Government employees. The service is impartial and non-judgemental. Staff welfare can provide support with regards to a wide range of issues including; work related problems, domestic issues, ill health, stress, bereavement, substance misuse and support through trauma or following a critical incident. Individuals can self-refer to the service. More information here: <https://hr.gov.im/workplace-wellbeing/staff-welfare-services/>
- **Victim Support. – Telephone 679950.**
Has specialist qualified domestic violence advisors (IDVAs), who alongside the survivor can effectively work to improve the safety of the survivors and their families. They provide emotional support and practical help. Mon- Fri 8.30 to 4.30pm
- **Women's Refuge – Telephone 677900**
Please note calls to this number are to an answering service, a SAFE number on which call back can be received.

If you, or a colleague is in immediate danger, please call 999