

**Domestic abuse.  
It's all our business.**



## Canopus Case Study

*Global Specialty Lines (Re)Insurer, [Canopus](#), began working with Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) to launch its own domestic abuse policy in 2022.*

As survivor's of domestic abuse, Personal Assistant to the Chief Human Resources Officer at Canopus, Samantha, and Claims Adjuster, Rowena, felt passionately about ensuring the company had a robust and supportive response in place. Samantha spoke to EIDA about how Canopus has begun to tackle domestic abuse.

### How it all started

During the coronavirus pandemic and successive lockdowns, employers had an increasing duty of care to their employees while they now worked from home. As such, Canopus wanted to better understand the impact that domestic abuse has on employees and provide the appropriate support to them.

To help raise awareness, we invited Meghan Field from women's charity, [Advance](#), to talk to employees about the prevalence of domestic abuse and the signs which we should be looking out for, should a colleague be suffering.

Meghan subsequently recommended we reach out to EIDA – it was during an EIDA webinar that we heard about EIDA's template for a domestic abuse policy. We then went to the [Mad World Summit](#) on workplace wellbeing and joined a roundtable of companies who were in the process of launching and implementing domestic abuse policies, to gain and share ideas.

### The next steps

It became apparent that as a responsible employer asking staff to work from home, we need to do all we can to ensure that if a colleague was ever a victim of abuse, we had a robust support plan in place. The shocking statistics over lockdown reinforced the need to implement a comprehensive and all-encompassing policy.

We took the idea of creating a policy that would protect our colleagues to Canopus HR – they agreed that the workplace now included our homes, so felt it was right that we invested in creating protections for our colleagues who may face domestic abuse. So, we went to work in creating a policy to outline how our business would address domestic abuse.

Rowena and I were supported by Canopus to train for the nationally recognised '[Women's Aid Award, in Tackling and Preventing Domestic Abuse](#)'. This gave us the confidence to know how best to respond if an employee affected by domestic abuse ever came to us.

We were passionate about getting our response right and put a lot of energy and thought into creating our Domestic Abuse policy. As survivors of domestic abuse, we thought about what measures and support would have been helpful for us at the time, from our employer. We joined an [Insurance Supper Club](#) (ISC) working group on domestic abuse, to link up with other insurance organisations who were keen to implement change around domestic abuse support. We ensured we attended webinars focused on domestic abuse, carried out our own research and used the

resources provided by Women's Aid to further understand various avenues of support a survivor may need.

Whilst undertaking our Women's Aid training, we became aware of the need to offer support to the perpetrator and create a space that allowed them to feel comfortable approaching us, should they be concerned about their behaviour. It was challenging to manage how we were able to provide support, yet also condone abusive behaviour and enforce a no tolerance policy. Our purpose of supporting the perpetrator is ultimately and always to support the victim.

We also undertook training with Sistah Space, a non-profit initiative offering domestic abuse services for African heritage women and girls, to ensure that we were using inclusive language and understood the impact of domestic abuse beyond our own culture.

We announced the policy initially to our Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Committee, followed by a wider announcement to all employees in February 2022. In addition to this, we also launched a 'Domestic Abuse Information Portal' on the Canopus intranet along with a 'Line Manager Pack', signposting advice for managers with direct reports to help them identify and spot the signs of domestic abuse.

## **What specific initiatives do you have in place?**

Our support for survivors includes but is not limited to; two weeks' leave with paid accommodation ('no questions asked' and no police report required), special paid leave for childcare or court appointments (no proof required) and paid time off to access counselling or specialist support.

We respond to perpetrators disclosing abuse by providing information, support and signposting to external organisations. Any individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence relating to domestic abuse is subject to the organisation's disciplinary procedures.

## **The impact so far**

In the few months since launching our policy, we have been approached by people in the business who support the policy, and managers have stated they feel much more prepared and aware of the signs they need to look out for.

While we are still in the early stages of embedding our response to domestic abuse at Canopus, we have received positive feedback from members of our senior Leadership Team. Rowena has received her team's monthly commendation for her work in implementing the policy.

## **Measuring and reporting**

We don't need to officially record anything, particularly details of disclosures, as these are confidential. However, our Chief HR Officer is closely following the domestic abuse policy rollout and its progress to ensure we stay on track.

## **How has EIDA helped?**

EIDA have been fantastic at responding to all of our queries on how to get started. It was also through EIDA that we learnt about the [Bright Sky](#) app which is now part of our mandatory suite of mobile phone apps at Canopus.

## What are your plans for the future?

We will be hosting a talk on domestic abuse in the coming weeks, where we will share our own experiences and how a domestic abuse policy at work would have benefitted us. There will also be more internal communications to ensure all staff are aware of the support available to them, detailed in the policy.

Additionally, we are planning an event to raise money for Sistah Space in the winter, to tie in with the '16 days of Action'. We want to continually raise awareness of this ongoing issue and show our support wherever we can.

## Three takeaways for other employers

### 1. Use EIDA's policy template

All you need to get started is EIDA's handy policy template and some time with your HR team to work out how to adapt it to your needs.

### 2. Empower survivors

At the heart of our action on domestic abuse at Canopus is empowering any survivors who approach the business to make their own decisions. We never act on behalf of those who disclose abuse, unless there is a serious risk to life.

### 3. A robust response to domestic abuse can fit within your time and resources

While we will annually review our policy and ensure our in-house advisors are on-hand to signpost and take up training, our action on domestic abuse is not onerous in terms of day-to-day management.