



Addressing perpetrators of domestic abuse

A guide for employers

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“Domestic abuse is endemic in our society. Millions of people are harmed each year, with ripple effects that impact all of us. Domestic abuse requires a response involving all of society, including in the workplace.

For the past decade, the Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) has developed a network of over 2,300 organisations working to implement effective workplace responses to domestic abuse. Most employers start this work by supporting employees who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse, to help them to keep safe and in work. Increasingly, employers recognise the uncomfortable truth that they will also employ people who perpetrate abuse. Responding to those who abuse is a challenging – but necessary – part of an effective workplace response to domestic abuse.

We find that employers consistently express a lack of confidence in responding to employees who abuse. It is important for workplaces to have a graduated response. They can make clear that domestic abuse is not tolerated and that those who abuse will be held to account. Employers can promote cultures of respect, build awareness of domestic abuse and make clear the behaviours that are unacceptable. They can signpost employees to expert services that support those who want to change their behaviours. They can also make clear that disciplinary action will be taken in appropriate cases. In this work, it is critical for employers to ensure that the safety of those being abused is central to any workplace interaction with employees who perpetrate abuse.

This resource will support employers to get started on their workplace response to perpetrators of domestic abuse. It has been produced by EIDA in partnership with Respect, and involves collaboration with organisations across the domestic abuse sector, independent experts, victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and learnings from our network of employer members. Thank you all for sharing your expertise. We plan to build on this work and welcome feedback on this resource, as well as suggestions for areas where employers want further guidance.”

Susan Bright, CEO of EIDA



“As the UK’s leading charity stopping perpetrators of domestic abuse, we have long called for community-wide approaches that support organisations across society to be part of prevention and early intervention with those causing harm. Too often, vital opportunities are missed. Perpetrators exist in all types and levels of employment, and effective responses help keep victims and survivors safe. Respect is pleased to have worked in partnership with EIDA on this new guidance, which supports employers to include perpetrators within their domestic abuse response.”

Jo Todd CBE, CEO of Respect

“Workplaces have a vital role to play in addressing domestic abuse. For many victim-survivors, the workplace can be a lifeline to access support, speak to someone they trust, and begin to rebuild their lives. But employers also have an important role in challenging abusive behaviours and helping to hold perpetrators to account for their actions. That means creating workplace cultures where abuse is recognised, harmful behaviour is challenged, and employers have the guidance, training, and confidence to respond effectively. The Government is committed to the relentless pursuit of perpetrators and preventing abuse before it escalates. Our Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy sets out a whole-of-society approach to domestic abuse, which recognises employers as crucial allies to strengthening accountability for perpetrators; supporting victim-survivors; and creating a society where domestic abuse is not tolerated. This guidance is an important milestone on that journey.”

Jess Asato MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

“Violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, remains one of the most pervasive and harmful issues facing our society today. Our ambition to tackle it must meet the scale of the challenge, which is why this government is committed to halving violence against women and girls in a decade. It will take us all, in every corner of our communities, including every workplace. Employers have a vital role in shaping workplace cultures, rejecting harmful behaviour, and promoting accountability. They are key partners in our mission to prevent abuse and deliver lasting change. I welcome this important guidance from the Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse and Respect and thank them for their continued leadership in helping employers address perpetrator behaviour, support victims and build safer workplaces for everyone.”

Minister Satvir Kaur, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls

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Foreword

In this guidance we talk about employers “holding perpetrators to account”. We want to emphasise that this does not necessarily mean that a perpetrator should be directly challenged to take accountability for their actions. The first principle of any response to domestic abuse, particularly in dealing with perpetrators, should be Respect’s principle of “Safety first – do no harm”. The safety of victim-survivors should always be central to the approach that workplaces take. If an employer is unsure about the safety implications and impact of the measures they plan to take, they should seek input and support from a specialist domestic abuse service.

Section 1:

Introduction

Why addressing perpetrators of domestic abuse is a workplace issue

Domestic abuse has devastating impacts on those affected, including children. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.¹ There is no excuse for abusive and violent behaviour. Those who abuse are responsible for their behaviour and can choose to change.

Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (covering England and Wales) as “*The abusive behaviour of one person towards another where they are personally connected and each is aged 16 or over.*” It covers physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional or other abuse, which can be a single incident or a course of conduct.²

Workplaces have a vital role to play as part of a whole-of-society response to domestic abuse. Workplaces can support victim-survivors to access help, and respond to perpetrators, by appropriately holding them to account and providing a pathway to support to change their harmful behaviours. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but by building a better understanding of domestic abuse and implementing effective policies and procedures, employers can equip themselves with the right tools to respond.

¹ [Crime Survey of England and Wales, year ending December 2025](#); UK Home Office: “[Shifting the Scales: Transforming the criminal justice response to domestic abuse](#)” (2025).

² You can find information about the position in Northern Ireland and Scotland here: [Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2021](#) and [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#).



A recent global scoping review of workplace responses to the perpetration of domestic abuse found that employer responses vary from institutional non-intervention (“it’s none of our business”) at one extreme to summary dismissal (with often limited consideration of the unintended consequences) at the other extreme.³ Instead, what is required is a graduated response.

Most perpetrators of domestic abuse will never come into contact with the criminal justice system. Domestic abuse is severely underreported, and only 6% of domestic abuse reported to the police lead to a conviction.⁴

We want to create a society where perpetrators are encouraged to recognise their harmful behaviours and are supported to make positive change. Work may be the first place they are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and seek help. Employers can play their part in holding perpetrators to account by raising awareness of abusive behaviours; making it clear to all employees that domestic abuse is never acceptable; creating a culture where colleagues feel empowered and supported to call out abusive behaviours; signposting those who abuse to advice lines and behaviour change programmes; and taking disciplinary action in appropriate cases. This can help create a workplace culture of safer workplaces, and a safer society for everyone.

³ Dayaram, K. et al: “[Workplace responses to perpetration of family and domestic violence: a global scoping review](#)” (2026), Safety Science.

⁴ [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2026; Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2025](#).



How domestic abuse affects the workplace

Domestic abuse is a workplace issue regardless of where the abuse takes place. Harm caused at home or elsewhere can still have significant impacts within the workplace, for both the employee and the organisation.

Leveraging employment as a tool of control

- It is not uncommon for perpetrators to show up at a victim-survivor's place of work. Where this happens, colleagues, as well as the victim-survivor, may be directly harmed.
- Perpetrators may sabotage the victim-survivor's job and/or career progression by preventing them from being at work on time or attending meetings, creating crises that require them to take time off, or damaging equipment they need to work, such as uniforms and tools.
- Perpetrators may threaten to (or may actually) spread malicious rumours about the victim-survivor among their colleagues, disseminate intimate images, share other personal information, or maliciously report the victim-survivor to managers or professional bodies to undermine their professionalism.⁵

⁵ Birdsall, N. et al: "Sexual corruption: recognising the "abuse of power" in professional sexual misconduct" (2025), Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice; Dheensa, S. et al: "Behind the mask: A domestic abuse survey of healthcare workers to highlight support needs" (2025), Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health.

- Perpetrators may use their professional status (for example as police officers, doctors, lawyers, and other positions involving public trust) as a tool of control, particularly if they share a workplace or work in the same sector as the person they are abusing.⁶ Professional status, perceived credibility, and access to systems with personal information can all be exploited as part of coercive control.⁷

Using workplace property to carry out abuse

- Perpetrators often use workplace property such as phones, laptops, vehicles, and access to (and sometimes ability to alter) workplace systems as tools to abuse. Phones and laptops can be used to monitor and control the victim-survivor's whereabouts and online presence, and to perpetrate image-based abuse; vehicles may be used for stalking, and in some cases to cause physical harm to the victim-survivor.⁸
- The perpetrator may also be able to access work calendars, databases, or other confidential information about the person they are abusing if they work in the same workplace.
- Perpetrators who work for the police, local government, health services or other public sector organisations may have access to the victim-survivor's address, contact details and other personal information which can be misused to facilitate abuse, stalking or retaliation.

Impact on performance, productivity, and workplace safety

- While the negative impacts of domestic abuse on people experiencing abuse are widely recognised, research shows that perpetration has similar negative impacts that affect the workplace. These include decreased performance, productivity, and loss of focus at work – which in some professions can cause accidents.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ERC-UKRI funded research (Mulvihill et al., 2023–2028) is currently underway looking at regulator and professional body responses to sexual misconduct, violence and abuse perpetrated by professionals, which includes emerging evidence on domestic abuse. See <https://powerfulperpetrators.org/about/>

⁸ LaVan, H. & Lopez, Y: "The Impact of Domestic Violence in the Workplace" (2012), Employment Relations Today; Rothman, E. & Perry, M: "Intimate Partner Abuse Perpetrated by Employees" (2004), Journal of Occupational Health Psychology; Hearn, J. et al: "The Spread of Digital Intimate Partner Violence: Ethical Challenges for Business, Workplaces, Employers and Management" (2023), Journal of Business Ethics.

⁹ Ibid; Schmidt, M. & Barnett, A: "Effects of Domestic Violence on the Workplace" (2023), Vermont Council on Domestic Violence.

- The total cost of domestic abuse to workplaces in England alone is estimated to be over £17 billion per year.¹⁰

Risk to workplace culture

- Any perception that the organisation has failed to take steps to hold perpetrators safely to account may inadvertently signal a tolerance for abusive behaviour, which may in turn deter existing employees from reporting abuse, and potential job candidates from wanting to work for the organisation.¹¹

Reputational risk to the organisation

- If details of domestic abuse perpetrated by an employee become public, particularly if the employee holds a senior role, there may be significant reputational risks for the organisation.
- In some regulated sectors, an employee's conduct (including outside work) may have regulatory implications for the employee and their employer.



¹⁰ Women's Aid ["Investing to save: The economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support"](#) (2023).

¹¹ Adams-Prassl, A. et al: ["Violence Against Women at Work"](#) (2023), The Quarterly Journal of Economics.



An employer's legal responsibilities

Employers have a range of legal responsibilities relating to their employees which may be relevant to employees experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse. Insofar as these responsibilities relate to the employee's work duties, they will extend to employees who work from home, for some or all of the time.

- **The Statutory Guidance accompanying the Domestic Abuse Act 2021** states that "Employers should consider the impact of domestic abuse on their employees as part of their duty of care".¹² As best practice, "employers should develop policies to set out their approach to domestic abuse within their workforce including... signposting to specialist organisations, roles and responsibilities within the organisation, any education and training available, the practical support they can offer to victims in their workforce and their approach to perpetrators in the workplace".¹³
- **The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** concerns the welfare of employees. It requires employers to undertake risk assessments to identify risks arising in the course of their work and adopt suitable measures to mitigate these risks. Employers should be aware of the general obligation to maintain a safe working environment and should consider domestic abuse issues which may rise in the workplace in the context of risk assessments.

¹² Domestic Abuse: ["Statutory Guidance"](#) (paragraph 406) (2022), UK Home Office.

¹³ Ibid (paragraph 407).

- The **Equality Act 2010** imposes a legal duty on employers to take “all reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment of their workers, expanded from the original duty to take “reasonable steps” in October 2026. Employers who fail to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment risk enforcement action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and increased compensation in successful claims.
- There are potential **overlaps between the domestic abuse legislation and the sexual harassment legislation**. The Equality Act covers harassment by third parties, such as clients and customers, in the course of employment. A practical example could be instances where sexual harassment is used as a form of domestic abuse in the workplace.
- While safeguarding responsibilities under the **Care Act 2024** are only a statutory requirement for local authority and care workers, many organisations expect employees to follow basic safeguarding principles as part of good practice and provide safeguarding training as part of mandatory training.

Who are the perpetrators of domestic abuse?

Perpetrators of domestic abuse can be anyone. They come from all backgrounds, work in all sectors, across all levels of seniority. They can often be charismatic, well-liked, and hold positions of power and leadership within their organisations and community. Domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 employees in their lifetime,¹⁴ and organisations should recognise they are likely to employ both perpetrators and victim-survivors in their workforce.

While it can be very uncomfortable both personally and professionally to recognise that a trusted colleague may be a perpetrator of domestic abuse, it is crucial for an organisation’s response to be guided by policy and procedures, rather than perceptions or assumptions. Domestic abuse is not defined by a particular type of person.

14 ONS: [“Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics”](#) (2025).

A note on gender

Most perpetrators of domestic abuse are men, and most victim-survivors are women and children.¹⁵ Data consistently shows that men constitute over 90% of convicted perpetrators of domestic abuse. Both men and women killed in domestic homicides are most likely to be killed by men (women by male partners or ex-partners, followed by male relatives; and men by male relatives, followed by female partners or ex partners).¹⁶ Women are also the majority of victims in cases of domestic abuse-related suicides.¹⁷

EIDA’s mission is to equip employers to support all their employees affected by domestic abuse. We therefore take an inclusive approach to domestic abuse and use gender-neutral words to describe both perpetrators and victim-survivors. However, we recognise that domestic abuse-related crimes are gendered and disproportionately affect women and children.



15 Note that children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right where they see, hear, or otherwise experience the effects of the abuse (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Section 3).
16 ONS: [“Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2025”](#).
17 VKPP: [“Domestic Homicide Project”](#) (2025).

What is the government doing to help employers address perpetrators?

“The relentless pursuit of perpetrators” is the second pillar of the government’s **Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy**, which supports the government’s ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade. The strategy recognises employers as vital partners in a whole-of-society response to domestic abuse, including in efforts to hold perpetrators to account.

The government’s action plan includes key commitments to ensure workplaces are safe from domestic abuse. This includes updating existing guidance on workplace support for domestic abuse victim-survivors, encouraging employers to ensure that their staff receive sufficient training, and implementing robust policies and processes for responding to victim-survivors and perpetrators in the workplace. The strategy also recommends that employers become members of EIDA.¹⁸

Currently, there is no consistent approach across regulators and professional bodies about how evidence of domestic abuse (committed during work or outside work) or domestic abuse-related convictions should affect registration and vetting, licensing, fitness-to-practise decisions, safeguarding or public confidence considerations.¹⁹ However, the government has announced that it will consult on the introduction of punitive measures for perpetrators, including making convictions grounds for professional bans.²⁰ The Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy is clear that perpetrators of these serious crimes should not be allowed to hold positions of power, privilege or influence and that this must apply across all sectors, from healthcare to sport.²¹ The introduction of such measures will support employers in making clear the behaviours that are unacceptable and in playing their part in holding perpetrators to account.

¹⁸ UK Home Office: **Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy Volume 2 – Action Plan**, paragraph 33 (2025).

¹⁹ ERC-UKRI funded research (Mulvihill et al., 2023–2028) is currently underway looking at regulator and professional body responses to sexual misconduct, violence and abuse perpetrated by professionals, which includes emerging evidence on domestic abuse. See <https://powerfulperpetrators.org/about/>.

²⁰ UK Home Office: **Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls – Volume 2 – Action Plan** paragraph 14 (2025).

²¹ UK Home Office: **Freedom from Violence and Abuse: Volume 1 – Strategy** page 49 (2025).



Section 2:

Implementing a workplace response to perpetrators of domestic abuse

The Recognise, Respond, Refer framework

EIDA uses the “Recognise, Respond, Refer” framework throughout our resources to structure a workplace approach to domestic abuse. While the “RRR” framework is most often used to support victim-survivors, it can also be applied to perpetrators. This involves an organisation raising awareness of abusive behaviours; responding appropriately when concerns are identified; and taking action within the organisation’s remit – including signposting to specialist external services and taking disciplinary action in appropriate cases.

The employer may find out about domestic abuse because of allegations made by the victim-survivor or colleagues, notification by the police or other agencies, or the employee needing time off to attend court or other appointments. In some cases, an employee may voluntarily ask for help to deal with their abusive behaviour.

While signs that someone is a perpetrator of domestic abuse may not emerge directly at work, it is important to be alert to conversations about family trouble and conflict over children; derogatory and misogynistic remarks; substance abuse;²² and difficulty in regulating emotions.

²² NPCC: [“Pilots find high levels of drug use in domestic abuse offenders”](#) (2023).



Key principles of a workplace response

It is vital to underline that a workplace response towards victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse go hand in hand. Both are necessary to take effective action against domestic abuse.

- In responding to employees who may be perpetrating domestic abuse, employers will need to consider their **duty of care to all employees**, as well as **an employee’s entitlement to a fair process** in relation to allegations of abuse.
- Any interaction with a perpetrator where the aim is to address their harmful behaviour must consider the safety of adult and child victim-survivors. Respect’s principle of **“Safety first – do no harm”** is equally applicable in employer settings.²³ In practice, this means considering the potential impacts and consequences for victim-survivors when taking action with perpetrators. There is no obligation on employers to report domestic abuse to the police, especially where the victim-survivor is opposed to that happening. However, if there is an immediate risk to someone’s life or health, call 999. If the call is made contrary to the wishes of the victim-survivor, make this fact clear to the emergency services.

²³ Respect: [“Respect Principles”](#) (2022).

- Where the victim-survivor is known to the employer, **the victim-survivor's wishes should wherever possible be sought and centred in the workplace perpetrator response.** Where it is not possible or appropriate to seek input from a victim-survivor, employers should draw on the expertise of specialist domestic abuse services to help inform a safe and effective response.
- **Actions taken should be tailored** to the circumstances, severity, urgency, and risk identified, and will also be shaped by the resources available to the organisation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to perpetrators of domestic abuse, nor to victim-survivors. Every case is unique and must be assessed in its own context, whilst the organisation's policies are applied fairly and consistently. It is helpful to have a named person/people within the organisation from whom line managers and others can seek advice on how to handle individual cases or situation. It may also be necessary to seek legal advice, as well as advice from specialist domestic abuse organisations.



- **Build an organisational culture of trust and accountability.** Having open and regular conversations in the workplace about domestic abuse, including identifying harmful behaviours, as part of an effective workplace response (as outlined in the EIDA Handbook), is essential to creating an environment where victim-survivors feel safe to seek support and/or share their experiences. The employer should set out a clear position that domestic abuse is unacceptable at any level of the organisation, while encouraging help-seeking and behaviour change where appropriate. The goal is to create a culture where employees are confident that reports about a colleague's abusive behaviour will be taken seriously regardless of the colleague's seniority, rank or status.
- **Be mindful of language.** Throughout this resource, we refer to "perpetrators of domestic abuse". This may also be the term your organisation adopts in its official policies and procedures. However, in communications with employees, particularly those that centre on domestic abuse perpetration, employers may choose to use language that invites conversation rather than judgement, such as "people who cause harm", or "people who use harmful behaviours towards their partner and/or family". This may be used to engage directly with people who may not identify with the term "perpetrator" or consider their conduct to be abusive. For example: *"Are you worried about how your behaviour may be affecting your partner, children, or other family members?"*
- **Safety is the goal, behaviour change is the mechanism.** Behaviour change programmes for domestic abuse perpetrators are structured interventions designed to help people who use abusive behaviours in intimate or family relationships to understand, stop, and take responsibility for those behaviours. Employers can signpost to the **Respect Phoneline** for people causing harm which is available nationwide and to accredited behaviour change programmes if they are available in their area. It is not appropriate for employers to try to engage in behaviour change work themselves, as this work is complex and carries risk, requiring trained specialists.²⁴

²⁴ See Annex II: Behaviour change programmes.

Taking an intersectional approach

Perpetrators of domestic abuse exist in all communities. However, the way their behaviour is understood, identified, and responded to can be shaped by systemic forms of oppression and inequality.

Perpetrators from all backgrounds may be highly regarded professionally; they may be charming and well-liked; and seen as leading social figures within their communities. These factors can make it harder for employers to recognise or act on abusive behaviour. Employers must avoid relying on character assumptions and instead focus on patterns of behaviour and potential risk.

Employers must take care to ensure that neither bias nor discomfort interferes with recognising and responding to abusive behaviour. Workplace perpetrator responses should apply policies and principles consistently, while considering the intersecting identities of the person causing harm. Employers can consult 'by-and-for' specialist organisations where needed to sense-check their approach. There are some specialist behaviour change programmes available in parts of the country for people from marginalised communities.

Black and ethnically minoritised perpetrators

Black and ethnically minoritised perpetrators are over-represented in criminal justice referrals but under-represented in voluntary perpetrator programmes. Structural racism, mistrust of statutory systems, and a lack of culturally competent provision all contribute to this gap.

Perpetrators whose victims are of ethnically minoritised background, may exploit systemic inequalities to maintain control over their victims, including by jeopardising their immigration status (while protections exist to address this, many victim-survivors will not be aware of them); keeping them financially dependent; exploiting language barriers to prevent them from accessing help; and limiting their access to support systems such as family and other networks.

If perpetrators suggest that concerns about their behaviour are discriminatory, or are evidence that their culture or religion is misunderstood, employers should acknowledge the concern respectfully and re-focus the discussion on behaviour and impact.

While discrimination is real and must be taken seriously, it must not be used as a justification to deflect from abusive behaviour or undermine actions to ensure safety. By accepting culture as an excuse for abusive behaviours, employers risk colluding with the perpetrator.

LGBT+ perpetrators

People identifying as LGBT+ are at increased risk of domestic abuse compared to the general population, and the risk increases further for ethnically minoritised LGBT+ individuals. In LGBT+ relationships (or families with LGBT+ identifying members), abuse may manifest as threatening to disclose someone's identity or sexual orientation without their consent; controlling access to hormonal treatment for gender reassignment; and humiliating or threatening to harm someone because of their identity.

Neurodivergent perpetrators

Neurodivergence should not be used as an explanation or excuse for abusive behaviour, and employers should not make assumptions about abusive behaviour based on a person's diagnosis, self-identity or perceived traits. Unambiguously explaining to an employee which behaviours are concerning and why, outlining the relevant workplace policies, specifying the expected changes and the reasons behind them, and describing the impact if the behaviour continues is most helpful.

Reasonable adjustments are likely to be appropriate during an investigation or disciplinary process. These could include adapting the sensory environment, how information is communicated, providing information in advance, allowing additional processing time and communicating in advance where meetings will be held and how they will be structured. Adjustments enable equitable participation without compromising safeguarding, victim-survivor safety or accountability.

Employers should also avoid making assumptions or judging risk based on how someone presents in meetings or formal investigations. A person may outwardly appear anxious, distressed, detached, confused or highly articulate. These behaviours do not, on their own, indicate whether someone is or is not a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

It is useful to understand that accessibility and accountability can and need to coexist. Supporting an employee's sensory, communication, information, or social processing needs or any other disability-related needs does not mean excusing, minimising or overlooking abusive behaviour.

Policies, procedures, and resources

Domestic abuse policies

- Employers must ensure they have a workplace domestic abuse policy or written guidance that makes clear that **the organisation does not tolerate domestic abuse** and sets out the measures the organisation takes in relation to employees who perpetrate abuse. The domestic abuse policy and other relevant policies should cover the use of workplace property such as laptops, phones, or vehicles to carry out abuse, and abuse that takes place outside of work. Policies should also make clear that the organisation may take practical measures in response to abuse, such as changing the perpetrator's work location where this is possible (practically and contractually), and disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal. It should be clear that this would apply irrespective of the perpetrator's seniority within an organisation.

Example clause: "[Employer] recognises the impact of domestic abuse on employees. We are committed to supporting staff affected and reserve the right to take action if an employee is found to be perpetrating abuse, including taking disciplinary measures where appropriate."

- It is important to outline that the organisation will treat any allegation, disclosure, or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a **case-by-case basis** with the aim of supporting accountability and change.²⁵ Employers should follow procedures consistently and apply the same principles, risk assessment process (usually in collaboration with a specialist domestic abuse service), and decision-making framework to every case, while recognising that the appropriate response will differ depending on the circumstances, level of risk and connection between the workplace and the behaviour.

²⁵ UK Home Office: ["Standards for domestic abuse perpetrator interventions"](#) (2023); UK Ministry of Justice: ["Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System 2024"](#) (2025); Adisa, O. & Allen, K: ["Increasing safety for those experiencing family and intimate relationship harm within black and minority ethnic communities by responding to those who harm: Survey findings"](#) (2020), University of Suffolk; Bland, M. et al: ["Describing Patterns of Known Domestic Abuse Among Different Ethnic Groups"](#) (2022), Frontiers in Psychology. UNISON: ["Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue"](#) (2022).

- Be cautious about applying **“zero tolerance”** approaches, as there may be legal constraints on the actions employers can take and a formal commitment to a “zero tolerance” approach may give rise to expectations that all perpetrators will face disciplinary measures – which may not always be conducive to keeping the victim-survivor safe. Instead, an organisation can state that it “does not tolerate” domestic abuse and set out a clear organisational position, while retaining the flexibility to respond in a way that best promotes safety and accountability in each situation.
- Make clear that the right to take disciplinary action also applies to **colleagues found to be assisting the perpetrator** in carrying out the abuse. Careful consideration must be given in any case where third parties are involved. Whilst evidence suggests that it is not uncommon for colleagues, including managers, to collude with perpetrators²⁶, their actions may result from intimidation or coercion by a more senior colleague. Such cases will therefore require careful consideration to understand the reason for the third party's actions.
- **It may be necessary to consider suspension** as part of the workplace response to perpetrators of domestic abuse. This may be relevant in cases where the perpetrator is under police investigation or going through the criminal justice system; where they pose a threat to colleagues (including the victim-survivor); or where the allegation poses likely grounds for dismissal and suspension is reasonably necessary to protect the integrity of an investigation.²⁷ In these cases, employers will also need to consider the impact of such measures on the safety of the victim-survivor(s), seeking their input where possible, as well as expert domestic abuse advice to ensure alignment with the principle of “Do no harm”. For example, suspension may lead the perpetrator to blame the victim-survivor for the consequences they are experiencing and risk exacerbating the abuse. This does not mean that employers should avoid action where it is appropriate and necessary. Rather, it reinforces the importance of potential impacts on victim-survivors as part of risk assessment and safety planning, particularly where the victim-survivor remains in contact with, connected to, or dependent on the perpetrator, including through child contact.

²⁶ Lim, K. et al: “Impact of Domestic Violence Offenders on Occupational Safety & Health: A Pilot Study” (2004); Schmidt, M. & Barnett, A: **“A Vermont survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer intervention programs”** (2012); Mulvihill, N. & Sweeting, F: “Sexual and violent police perpetrators: the institutional response to reporting victims” (2025), Policing and Society.

²⁷ Refuge & Respect: Domestic violence resource manual for employers (2009).

- **Align the organisation's workplace domestic abuse policy²⁸ with other relevant workplace policies** to avoid conflicting messaging and to outline clear expectations. These may include policies on:
 - Bullying and harassment
 - Whistleblowing
 - Safe recruitment
 - Disciplinary processes
 - Safeguarding
 - IT and communications systems
 - Use of social media
 - Violence Against Women and Girls
 - Employee code of conduct



²⁸ **Employers can find a template domestic abuse policy, “Sharon’s Policy”, here.**

Procedures and resources

- Employers may choose to carry out **pre-employment procedures** such as background checks to determine whether an applicant has a criminal history, where possible and in compliance with UK GDPR requirements.
- **Establish clear and confidential reporting mechanisms** for employees who may wish to report concerns about a colleague's behaviour. Workplaces must make clear that employees who report abuse in good faith will not face negative consequences (non-retaliation). Workplaces must also ensure that any information relating to a disclosure or accusation is stored in a secure place. EIDA provides guidance on the collection, storage, and sharing of sensitive data related to domestic abuse.²⁹
 - Employers may wish to provide anonymous routes for reporting concerns, although this may impact the employer's ability to undertake risk assessments and take effective action.
 - Make clear that while reporting is confidential, where there is a serious and imminent safety threat to an employee and/or their dependents, the employer will call the police and, where relevant, child protection services – or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for employees working with children or vulnerable adults. Employers in regulated sectors may have additional reporting duties related to professional standards and safeguarding obligations.
- Ensure your **EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)** provider (if you have one) has received specialist training to respond to domestic abuse, including disclosures of abusive behaviour. They need to be trained to signpost to support services for victim-survivors, and specialist perpetrator advice lines and interventions (rather than generic mental health support). EAPs must not refer partners in abusive relationships to couples counselling, which is neither appropriate nor safe.
- It will also be useful to obtain an overview of **locally based perpetrator services** such as accredited behaviour change programmes that the organisation can signpost employees to.³⁰

²⁹ EIDA: [“Data collection, storage, and use related to domestic abuse”](#) (2024).

³⁰ See Annex II: Behaviour change programmes; and UK Home Office: [“Standards for stalking and domestic abuse perpetrator interventions”](#) (2026).



- Make sure the **domestic abuse training** you provide for managers, HR team, and other employees covers how to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour in the workplace, including use of workplace resources to monitor or harass a partner or other family member. It may be useful to establish a designated, trained point of contact in HR to oversee case management and sense-check suspected cases as they arise.

A tool for inquiry – Clare's Law

The **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)**, also known as "Clare's Law," enables the police to disclose information about someone's abusive past where this is considered necessary and proportionate to help protect someone (both women and men) from domestic abuse. Employers can proactively raise awareness of Clare's Law in the workplace as part of their efforts to inform victim-survivors about the options available to them.

- The "Right to Ask" enables a person to ask the police to check whether a current or ex-partner has a history of violent or abusive behaviour. If records show that someone may be at risk of domestic abuse, the police will consider disclosing the information to the person at risk or to another person who can help safeguard them, in order to protect them from harm.
- The "Right to Know" enables the police to make a disclosure on their own initiative if they receive information about the violent or abusive behaviour of a person that may affect the safety of a current or ex-partner.

The Right to Ask extends to third parties, including employers that are worried about an employee's behaviour. The employer should not submit a request without the agreement of the person who may be at risk. In limited and exceptional scenarios, police may share information through the DVDS scheme with an employer to safeguard an individual at risk of domestic abuse.

It is important to note that requests under Clare's Law do not automatically result in a disclosure, and the police will only disclose information where this is considered lawful, necessary, and proportionate to protect someone from domestic abuse. Disclosures can take time to assess and process. Clare's Law is focused on domestic abuse by intimate partners or ex-partners, whereas the statutory definition of domestic abuse also covers certain abusive behaviours perpetrated by wider family members.

In addition, the absence of police records or a disclosure should not be taken as evidence that the individual poses no risk, as domestic abuse is severely underreported and not all abusive behaviour comes to the attention of the police.



Section 3:

A workplace response in action

Raising awareness of your workplace perpetrator response

- **Pre-employment:** Employers can embed information about their domestic abuse response, including their perpetrator response, in communications to prospective employees. Some employers may provide details of their domestic abuse response in their recruitment materials.
- Embed communications about your domestic abuse response in your **onboarding and induction processes**. This ensures that all new employees will learn about domestic abuse and the employer's approach.
- **Include specialist services for perpetrators on your domestic abuse information page.** Most employers will have information about the support available to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse on their intranet pages or similar. This is a good place to signpost to helplines and behaviour change programmes and other interventions. Taking an intersectional approach as outlined above is key: make sure you have a diverse list of services, keeping in mind the demographics of your workforce.
- **Include examples of abusive behaviours in your overall awareness-raising communications** on domestic abuse throughout the year, such as during the 16 Days of Activism.³¹ This can include posters to hang in private spaces (such as the back of washroom doors) that give examples of abusive behaviours and invite those causing harm to take steps to change. EIDA and Respect have co-created **posters** signposting to the **Respect Phonenumber for perpetrators** of domestic abuse.

³¹ The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day).

By raising awareness of abusive behaviours and the programmes available to those causing harm, employers can help colleagues spot the signs in themselves and others.

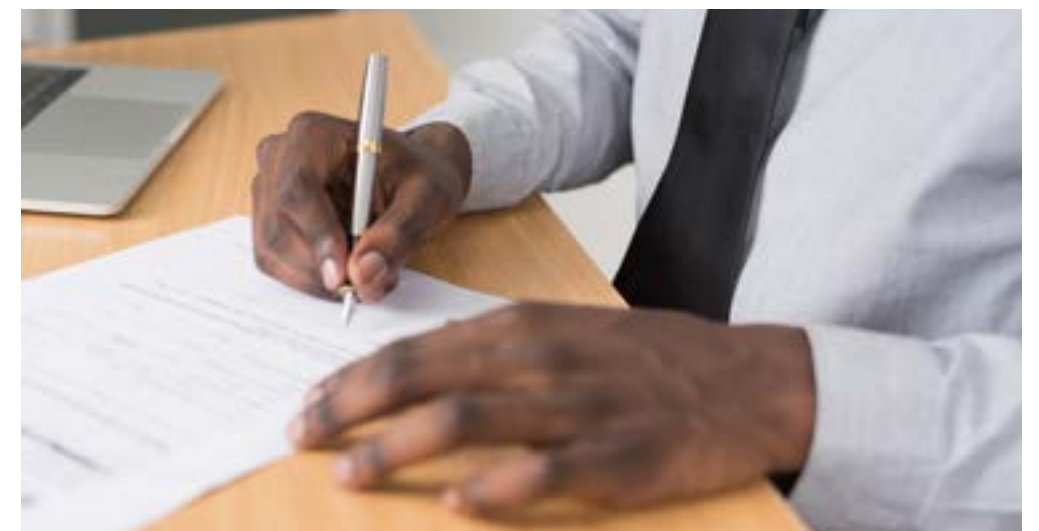
Responding to cases – example scenarios

Cases of alleged or confirmed perpetration of domestic abuse by an employee may come to the employer's attention in different ways. The following four scenarios are based on some of the common ways in which an employer may learn about allegations of domestic abuse by an employee.

In responding to employees who may be engaging in domestic abuse, employers will need to consider their duty of care to all employees, as well as an employee's entitlement to a fair process in relation to allegations of abuse.

Crucially, there does not need to be an active police investigation or court case against the employee for employers to act. If there are concerns that an employee is engaging in abusive behaviour, employers can take immediate steps to gather information, assess workplace risk, and determine whether action is required in line with organisational policies and legal obligations, including making a record of information gathered and the steps taken.

It should be noted that every case will be different and the scenarios do not provide all the answers. Most organisations are at the early stages of working through the complexities of dealing with these issues. It will often be necessary to seek input from specialist domestic abuse organisations and legal advice in determining how to respond to individual cases.



Scenario 1: An employee discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse from someone who works for the same organisation

- Where the victim-survivor and the perpetrator work for the same organisation, this enables the employer to engage with the victim-survivor and to respond in a way that takes their wishes into account and promotes their safety.
- Employers should first consider the perspective of the victim-survivor and the need to keep them safe. The employer can offer practical support and signpost the victim-survivor to specialist services but should note that the victim-survivor may be reluctant to disclose concerns or fear that an employer's actions may increase risk.
- Employers will need to undertake a suitable and sufficient workplace risk assessment, which will cover the employee's work-related activities. This must be undertaken by someone competent to do so. Employers may not have this expertise in-house, in which case they should seek advice from a specialist domestic abuse organisation.
- Following the risk assessment, the employer may decide not to take immediate action in relation to the alleged perpetrator because there are concerns that doing so could increase risk to the victim-survivor; or they may decide to delay action until further information or specialist advice can be obtained.
- In discussion with the victim-survivor where possible, the employer may be able to adapt working hours and locations to separate the individuals and reduce risk. Safety measures should also apply to workplace events and trips. These arrangements should be kept under review and adapted as circumstances change. It is important to be aware that the risk of harm typically increases when the victim-survivor leaves an abusive situation and in the following months, as well as during civil and criminal justice proceedings. The victim-survivor may need additional support if the organisation decides to initiate its disciplinary policy and procedures given the heightened risk that the abuser may retaliate against the victim-survivor.
- In cases where economic abuse is identified, employers can ensure that all or part of the victim-survivor's salary is paid into an account that the perpetrator cannot access, if it is safe to do so without increasing risk.

- It may be necessary to involve IT support to secure the victim-survivor's workplace tech and to prevent the perpetrator from using workplace tech to carry out abuse.³²
- Managers, HR, or other employees should never attempt to mediate between victim-survivors and the perpetrator.
- If the perpetrator has disclosed their behaviours and are clear that they would like to seek help, the employer can signpost the perpetrator to the Respect Helpline and to behaviour change programmes.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation, the employer may decide to initiate the organisation's disciplinary policy and procedures but should only do so having carried out a reasonable investigation. This will typically involve asking the alleged perpetrator for their account of events. Depending on the facts it could potentially also include interviewing other employees who the victim-survivor says have witnessed abuse, or looking for evidence of abuse using work IT systems, if relevant. It may be reasonable to take steps to separate the victim-survivor and alleged perpetrator, or to suspend the alleged perpetrator during the investigation and any subsequent disciplinary process. When investigating allegations that an employee has engaged in harmful behaviours, only involve relevant colleagues on a need-to-know basis and inform participants in the investigation that they must keep the matter confidential. In cases where the victim-survivor does not want their experience of domestic abuse reported to the police, this must be assessed against safety and safeguarding risks. If an employer makes a police report contrary to the victim-survivor's wishes, they should make that fact clear to the police.
- It is important to be aware that it is common for a perpetrator to make a malicious allegation of domestic abuse against the victim-survivor to undermine any future disclosure or investigation – or to make a malicious counter-allegation of domestic abuse following a disclosure by the victim-survivor. It will be important to listen to both parties, have different managers dealing with each party and seek advice from a specialist domestic abuse organisation.

³² See further details from Refuge: ["Secure your tech"](#) (2025).

Scenario 2: Someone outside the organisation discloses that they are experiencing abuse from an employee

- Maintaining ongoing contact with the victim-survivor as described in Scenario 1 may be challenging, making it harder for the employer to ensure that the safety of the victim-survivor and any dependants is centred in the response. However, where possible, employers should seek to understand the perspective of the victim-survivor to help them and their dependants stay safe, and their preferred course of action in responding to the perpetrator. In such cases, an employer can seek the support of specialist domestic abuse services in developing their response and may also need legal advice.
- The employer may be able to share with the victim-survivor the organisation's procedures for dealing with the alleged perpetrator, signpost the victim-survivor to specialist support services and ask whether they have a safety plan in place. It is important to ask the victim-survivor what further communications they want from the organisation, whilst also managing the victim-survivor's expectations in terms of the information that can be shared with them, and the frequency of contact from the employer.
- Depending on the nature of the allegation, the employer may decide to initiate the organisation's disciplinary policy and procedures but should only do so having carried out a reasonable investigation into the allegations made about their employee and considered the impact of the allegations on the employee's ability to carry out their role. An investigation will normally involve asking the alleged perpetrator for their account of events and could include looking for evidence of abuse using work IT systems if there is reason to believe this may be the case. It may be reasonable to suspend the alleged perpetrator during the investigation and any subsequent disciplinary process.
- The employer will need to consider carefully what they share (if anything) about the information provided by the victim-survivor given the possibility of increased risk. It is important to ask the victim-survivor's consent before sharing any detail of what they have reported to maintain their trust and engagement with the process. Make clear to the victim-survivor that information will not be shared without their consent, while also sharing how this may impact on the employer's ability to carry out a reasonable investigation. When investigating allegations that an employee has engaged in harmful behaviours, instruct all those involved to keep the matter confidential.



Scenario 3: An employee discloses that they are worried about their own harmful behaviours

- This is one of the most challenging scenarios in which to seek victim-survivor views, as employers may not know who they are. In this scenario, employers should avoid assuming that identifying or contacting the victim-survivor is always necessary or appropriate. In some cases, a perpetrator may be more willing to disclose concerns about their behaviour if they know they can receive information and be signposted to specialist support without the employer seeking to identify the victim-survivor.
- Any decisions about sharing information externally or attempting to contact a victim-survivor should be guided by safeguarding responsibilities, risk, proportionality, and relevant legal obligations. Given the uncertainties that often arise in this scenario, employers are encouraged to seek advice from specialist domestic abuse services before taking any action to identify or contact a victim-survivor.
- However, where the victim-survivor is unknown, employers can still take meaningful steps to manage risk to the victim-survivor and the workplace, and support accountability. These may include:
 - Documenting the information disclosed, including any indicators of risk.
 - Consulting with safeguarding leads, HR, employee wellbeing leads and, where appropriate, specialist domestic abuse services.
 - Considering whether workplace systems, resources, technology or access arrangements could be facilitating abusive behaviour and whether any safeguards are required.
 - Clearly recording concerns, decisions and the rationale for actions taken in a way that is consistent with data protection obligations.
 - Providing information about specialist perpetrator-focused support, such as the Respect Phonenumber and accredited behaviour change programmes. If an employee accesses a local Respect-accredited behaviour change programme, they will be asked to provide details of current and former partners so that specialist support can be offered alongside the intervention, where appropriate and safe to do so.

- Depending on the circumstances (and if there are indications that the behaviour is escalating) consider whether it is appropriate to initiate the organisation's disciplinary policy and procedures, having carried out a reasonable investigation.
 - Triggers for an investigation could include concerns being raised by other employees who are aware of the employee's conduct in their private life, or if the employer becomes aware that IT systems are being used to commit abuse. While signs of escalation may be hard to spot in the workplace as many perpetrators are charismatic and well-liked, look out for: requests for colleagues to track the victim-survivor's social media; being rude or dismissive towards or about the victim-survivor; or using workplace tools to carry out abuse.
 - An investigation will normally involve discussing the matter with the employee to understand the current position. It may be reasonable to suspend the employee during the investigation and any subsequent disciplinary process as described above.





Scenario 4: A case comes to the employer's attention because the employee is being investigated by external agencies or has been arrested

- If the victim-survivor is known to the employer and there is a legitimate basis for contact, employers should consider appropriate safeguarding actions, and consider the approach outlined in Scenario 1.
- Statutory services, usually the police, will liaise with employers on a need-to-know basis to safeguard the victim-survivor, to secure evidence for an ongoing case, and to cooperate on offender management. Where the victim-survivor is unknown, or where statutory agencies are already involved, employers should avoid making assumptions about risk or initiating contact with the victim-survivor without first seeking appropriate advice. The statutory agencies can make referrals to specialist support for the victim-survivor. Please see Annex II for further information on individuals identified as "high-risk, high-harm" perpetrators.

- Employers can continue to take steps as outlined in scenario 3 to manage risk within the workplace while cooperating with statutory safeguarding arrangements.
- Employers and colleagues should maintain clear professional boundaries and avoid actions that could compromise victim-survivor safety or criminal justice processes (such as providing the perpetrator with information about the victim-survivor or offering them financial or practical support that enables the continued perpetration of abuse), although employers are likely to have an obligation to continue to pay suspended employees.³³
- Leave should be provided for the perpetrator to attend formal meetings such as court hearings and behaviour change programmes, both when these are voluntary and when they are mandated by the courts.
- The employer may also decide to initiate the organisation's disciplinary policy and procedures if it is possible to investigate the matter fairly while criminal justice processes are in progress and the investigation indicates that disciplinary action is warranted. An investigation could include interviewing the employee if they are willing to participate – employees may refuse to avoid prejudicing their position in the criminal proceedings – and taking any evidence provided by statutory services into account.
- It is not always necessary for an employer to wait for the outcome of criminal proceedings before it is possible to act but should consider whether this is likely to be procedurally fair. Note that Employment Tribunals are required to pause proceedings if a criminal investigation or trial is ongoing, and the proceedings can only continue once criminal proceedings are complete.

³³ Schmidt, M. & Barnett, A: "A Vermont survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer intervention programs" (2012); Mulvihill, N. & Sweeting, F: "Sexual and violent police perpetrators: the institutional response to reporting victims" (2025), Policing and Society.

Case study:

Perpetration of Honour Based Abuse

Honour Based Abuse (HBA) can be a form of domestic abuse which occurs where a perpetrator(s) engages in abusive behaviour because they perceive that the victim-survivor has, is, or may behave in a way which shames or dishonours themselves, the perpetrator, their family or community, and does not comply with the accepted norms of behaviour in the perpetrator's community. There is no specific criminal offence of HBA. Instead, HBA covers a wide-ranging set of behaviours where the context of that behaviour is an essential element. It is an umbrella term covering crimes such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and wider crimes and behaviours that take place in an 'honour' context.

- Employers should include HBA in their domestic abuse policy and safeguarding processes and include information about HBA in regular training and communications around domestic abuse, to raise awareness of its nature and impacts. Not all HBA occurs within a domestic abuse context, and employers should ensure that their policies, safeguarding arrangements, and employee training recognise the distinct features of HBA, including the potential involvement of multiple perpetrators, and support victims appropriately.
- HBA may involve multiple perpetrators acting together, which can present additional risks to victim-survivors and require enhanced workplace safeguarding measures.
- HBA cases can escalate very quickly. Communication with the victim-survivor should be guided by their safety and circumstances. Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, maintain clear communication and make clear that you will call 999 if they or their dependants are at risk of serious harm.



- Employers should not attempt to mediate between victim-survivors and perpetrators. This includes situations where multiple family members or perpetrators work for the same organisation, as mediation may increase the risk to the victim-survivor.
- Cultural, religious, or other beliefs should never be used to excuse, justify, or minimise abusive behaviour. Employers should feel empowered in responding to HBA, and in challenging harmful attitudes or behaviours. Employers may find it helpful to undertake specialist cultural competency training to help with this.
- As HBA often involves people who would otherwise form a victim-survivor's support network (including family and community members), the victim-survivor is likely to need long-term safety planning and ongoing support.

Karma Nirvana operate the national HBA helpline for those affected by Honour Based Abuse: 0800 5999 247.

Section 4:

Resources and specialist services

- **EIDA's Directory of Support Services** contains national and local support services for victim-survivors and perpetrators, including specialist by-and-for services.
- **Respect** are the UK's leading charity working with perpetrators of domestic abuse. They offer a range of services for people causing harm who wish to change their behaviour.
 - **The Respect Phoneline** is a confidential helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators (male, female, in mixed or same sex relationships). The helpline offers information and advice to support perpetrators to stop their violence and change their abusive behaviours.
 - **The Make a Change** is a community-wide, early response approach currently available in Coventry, Durham, Newcastle, and Sunderland. It offers behaviour change work at the earliest opportunity and aims to remove barriers to help seeking and behaviour change, while centring survivors' safety and autonomy.
 - Respect also provide a directory of **Respect-accredited programmes** across England and Wales.
 - **The Respect Young People's Service** supports professionals to respond effectively to young people's use of violence and abuse in family and intimate relationships.
- **Hestia's Respond to Abuse Advice Line** is a free and confidential service for UK employers who want to support employees affected by domestic abuse. A team of trained Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) provide guidance, resources, and reassurance to employers, HR leads, managers, and other workplace representatives.

- **Rise Mutual** deliver behavioural change work in London with people who cause harm in intimate partner relationships and within families, including specialist services for children and young people, minoritised perpetrators, as well as early-intervention justice pathways, such as Out of Court Resolutions. They have services for men, women, and the LGBT+ community. They also provide training and consultancy to help organisations prevent and address unhealthy and harmful behaviours.
- **Expert interviews and webinar resources**
 - Jo Todd, CEO of Respect: [How can we address perpetrators of domestic abuse?](#)
 - Jaswant Narwal, Chief Crown Prosecutor at the Crown Prosecution Service: [Employers and criminal investigations against perpetrator employees](#)
 - Jo Broadbent, Employment Knowledge Counsel at Hogan Lovells Cadwalader: [Legal guidance for employers to address perpetrator employees](#)
 - EIDA Insight Hour webinar July 2025: [Addressing perpetrators in the workplace](#)
 - Campaign video by Respect and EIDA: [Holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account](#)



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Neurodiverse Connection

RISE Mutual

Surviving Economic Abuse

Switchboard

The ManKind Initiative

Viran Wiltshire KPM, Detective Sergeant, Metropolitan Police Service

Disclaimer: This guide is not a substitute for legal advice or specialist domestic abuse advice, which we recommend employers seek when dealing with incidents of alleged domestic abuse perpetration.



Annex I – Glossary

Behaviour change programmes	Behaviour change programmes are specialist interventions designed to help people who have used domestic abuse take responsibility for their behaviour and make sustained changes to stop harming partners, ex-partners, and family members.
By-and-for services	By-and-for services are designed and led by people who share the same protected characteristic(s) as the people they aim to serve. For example, a specialist domestic abuse organisation that is led by Black and minoritised women, for Black and minoritised women.
Coercive and controlling behaviour (CCB)	Coercive and controlling behaviour (CCB) is a form of domestic abuse and has been a criminal offence since December 2015. The offence now applies to people who are personally connected, including current or former intimate partners and family members, whether or not they live together. <i>Controlling behaviour</i> is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent, for example isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour. <i>Coercive behaviour</i> is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten someone.

Domestic abuse	A single incident or pattern of abuse between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected. This includes current or former partners and family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Abuse can include one or more of the following: physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse. Children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse. However, abusive behaviour directed at a person under the age of 16 is child abuse rather than domestic abuse.
Economic abuse	Economic abuse refers to behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person’s ability to acquire, use or maintain money, property, or other things that money can buy. It can include controlling a person’s income, spending, bank accounts, bills, and borrowing, as well as their access to transport, technology, property and everyday essentials like food and clothing. It can also include destroying items and refusing to contribute to household costs.
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	Sometimes known as ‘female circumcision’ or ‘female genital cutting’ it is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed for no medical reason. It is usually carried out on young girls before marriage, and it can cause long-term debilitating pain affecting sexual and reproductive health.
Forced marriage	Where one or both people do not, or cannot consent to the marriage. Most commonly, someone is taken overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place), a marriage is arranged for someone who lacks mental capacity to consent, or a marriage is arranged for someone before they turn 18. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in the UK.
Harassment	Unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of causing distress, fear, humiliation or offence. It can include bullying, sexual harassment and racially motivated harassment, and creating a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment for someone.

Honour Based Abuse (HBA)	Where a perpetrator(s) engages in abusive behaviour towards the victim who is a member of their family or ‘relevant connection’ because they perceive that the victim has, is or may behave in a way which shames or dishonours the victim, the perpetrator, their family or community, and does not comply with the accepted norms of behaviour in the perpetrator’s community. This can include causing another person to engage in abusive behaviour towards the victim and can be a single incident or pattern of behaviour. HBA is an umbrella term covering crimes such as forced marriage and FGM, as well as wider crimes and behaviours that take place in an ‘honour’ context such as breast-flattening, and virginity testing.
Image-based abuse	This includes both the creation of false or digitally altered images as well as non-consensual distribution, or threat thereof, of private sexual photographs and films.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality describes how different aspects of a person’s identity, such as their gender, race, disability, sexuality, can impact on their experiences of advantage and disadvantage in society.
Minimising language	Any language that downplays, dismisses, or trivialises the severity or impact of abuse or harm that a person has experienced. Common examples of minimising language are describing an incident as ‘low level’ or ‘just’ or ‘only’ an assault. This language invalidates the severity of the behaviour.
Non-retaliation	A commitment that people will not face punishment, harm, or unfair treatment for reporting a problem, sharing a concern, or taking part in an investigation.
Perpetrator (of domestic abuse)	A person who carries out acts and behaviours classified as domestic abuse. See Part 1, Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which contains the statutory definition of domestic abuse in England and Wales.³⁴

34 [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#).

Physical abuse	A form of domestic abuse when someone hurts or injures someone else on purpose. It includes the threat of physical harm.
Stalking	A pattern of fixated, obsessive, unwanted behaviour that is repeated, persistent, intrusive, and which causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress. Stalking can involve many types of unwanted behaviours e.g. repeatedly following someone, damaging their property, regularly sending unwanted gifts, or making unwanted or malicious communications.
Technology-facilitated abuse	Abuse that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media. In the context of domestic abuse, this can happen during or after a relationship. Examples include placing false or malicious information about someone on social media, “trolling”, image-based abuse, “upskirting”, the use of spyware or tracking devices without consent, and using smart home devices to control, monitor or frighten someone. The growing use of internet-connected home devices (such as smart speakers) and devices with location tracking capabilities can provide perpetrators with additional means to monitor, control, or harm someone.
Trauma-informed	A trauma-informed approach seeks to understand and respond to the impacts of trauma on people’s lives. Trauma-informed practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impact on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people.

Victim-survivor	Although ‘victim’ is a legal term within the criminal justice system, ‘survivor’ can be used as a term of empowerment to convey that a person has started the healing process and may have gained a sense of peace in their life. Some people identify as a victim; others prefer the term survivor and some neither. EIDA is committed to respecting people’s preferences in our interactions. In our work and materials, we use the term ‘victim-survivor’ or, when referring to a person specifically, we will use their preferred term.
Violence against women and girls (VAWG)	Acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls. The term encompasses a range of crimes and behaviours, including domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, Honour Based Abuse (HBA), rape and other sexual offences, including offences committed online. Men and boys can also be victim-survivors of these crimes and behaviours.
Virginity testing	A form of Honour Based Abuse, virginity testing is an inspection of the female genitalia, intended to determine whether a woman or girl has had vaginal sexual intercourse, based on harmful cultural perceptions of “purity”. It is illegal to carry out, offer, or aid and abet virginity testing in the UK, and for UK nationals abroad.

Annex II – Behaviour change programmes

Behaviour change programmes are specialist interventions designed to help people who have used domestic abuse to take responsibility for their behaviour and make sustained changes to stop harming partners, ex-partners, and family members.

These programmes are not anger management courses, nor are they relationship counselling. They focus specifically on domestic abuse, including patterns of coercive control, emotional abuse, intimidation, harassment, physical violence, sexual abuse and economic abuse. The primary purpose is to increase the safety and freedom of victim-survivors and any children affected by the abuse.

There are Respect and Home Office Standards requiring behaviour change programmes to be delivered alongside separate specialist support for victim-survivors.³⁵ The specialist service maintains contact with the victim-survivor(s) where appropriate and it is safe to do so, helping monitor risk and prioritising victim-survivor safety throughout the intervention.

Behaviour change programmes are not a replacement for the criminal justice system, but a necessary parallel path that, above all, focuses on stopping the abuse. They may often be a mandatory component of court orders. Provision varies locally across the UK. Employers should understand the services available in their area, so they are able to signpost individuals to appropriate support when possible.

Group-based behaviour change programmes are often designed for heterosexual men who have used abuse in intimate relationships, so they may not be suitable for women or LGBT+ perpetrators. Some providers offer adapted one-to-one or tailored interventions.

Do behaviour change programmes work?

The largest study of Respect accredited behaviour change programmes in the UK, the Mirabal Project³⁶, found positive changes across a number of outcomes, including reduction in physical and sexual violence, increased respect, improved communication and greater safety, freedom and autonomy for victim-survivors.

³⁵ UK Home Office: [“Standards for domestic abuse perpetrator interventions”](#) (2023); Respect: [“Respect Standard”](#) (2022).

³⁶ Project Mirabal: [“Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes – Steps Towards Change”](#) (2015).

Workplace signposting to behaviour change programmes

Where local community-based provision exists, employers can signpost employees to a behaviour change programme and encourage self-referrals. There are currently few referrals direct from employers, which may be a missed opportunity. Participants in these programmes are more likely to engage (and stay engaged) when referrals come through trusted relationships, including employers, and when the programme is framed around personal growth and change rather than as punishment or surveillance.

We hope that this guidance will contribute to more employer referrals to behaviour change programmes when safe and appropriate.

However, it should be noted that signposting or referrals to behaviour change programmes should not replace safeguarding measures for the victim-survivor, or workplace investigations and disciplinary processes in response to allegations of abuse and criminal behaviour.

High-risk, high-harm perpetrators

There may be occasions where an employee is identified by their behaviours or by public agencies as a high risk, high harm (HRHH) perpetrator. These cases require careful safeguarding of the victim-survivor, and multi-agency management to prevent an increase in risk of serious harm. While managing HRHH perpetrators is the job of the police and public agencies, employers can also play an important role in helping safeguard the victim-survivor where they are an employee, including liaising with public agencies to support robust safety planning.

There are specialist interventions available to HRHH perpetrators to reduce harm and keep victim-survivors safe. These interventions take an intensive case management approach that challenges and helps the individual to change their behaviours and collaborates with partner agencies – like the police and social services – to end their abuse. Referrals to these programmes are made by public agencies, including within the criminal justice system. Employers cannot make referrals, nor can individuals self-refer. However, where relevant, employers should make every effort to accommodate participation by ensuring the employee is available to attend.

Annex III – Types of domestic abuse-related orders

Order type	What it is used for
Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN)	An emergency notice issued by the police following a domestic abuse incident to provide immediate protection to a victim-survivor.
Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO)	A court order that may be applied following a DAPN or through other routes. DAPOs can impose restrictions or positive requirements on a perpetrator to protect a victim-survivor from domestic abuse. For example, a DAPO may prohibit a perpetrator from returning to a residence or require them to engage with support aimed at changing their behaviour.
Non-Molestation Order	A civil court order that protects victim-survivors and any relevant children from domestic abuse. It can prevent a perpetrator from contacting, harassing, intimidating, threatening, or coming near the victim-survivor(s).
Sexual Risk Order (SRO)	A civil order designed to protect the public from the risk of sexual harm. It can place restrictions on an individual who has committed an act of a sexual nature and is considered to pose a risk, including in cases where there has been no criminal conviction.
Stalking Protection Order (SPO)	A civil court order that can be obtained by the police to protect a victim-survivor from stalking and the risk of future harm. It can prevent a suspect from contacting, approaching, monitoring or tracking a victim-survivor, even if they have not been convicted of a criminal offence.



Respect