



Domestic abuse can take many forms and can affect people of all genders, ethnicities, disabilities, and sexual orientation.

As an employer, we have a duty of care to all our employees, and when they are living in an abusive situation there is a responsibility on us to help and support where we can.

Resolving an abusive situation is not the responsibility of a manager; there are specialist agencies who will provide legal, financial and safety support to a person experiencing domestic abuse. However, managers can provide support to their employees by listening, making adjustments to working arrangements where possible and signposting their employee to additional sources of support.

This guide is to help managers support any employee experiencing domestic abuse. Through the use of case studies, it guides managers in some 'dos' and 'don'ts' and gives some practical tips on how managers can have a positive impact on an employee's personal situation.

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1. Background

There are an estimated 2.4m adults, aged 16 to 74, who experience domestic abuse each year (Crime Survey for England and Wales March 2019); this represents 5.7% of all adults ([Domestic Abuse statistics and trends](#)).

The majority of abuse is carried out by partners (ex or current), but a significant amount of abuse is carried out by other family members. The majority of those experiencing domestic abuse are women (75% of police recorded crimes) and young women aged 20-24 are more likely to be victims than women over the age of 25. The percentage of men experiencing domestic abuse is lower, but still significant.

The following types of abuse are also included in these figures: non-sexual domestic abuse (including physical force, emotional and financial abuse and threats), domestic stalking and domestic sexual assault.

It should be recognised that domestic abuse can also occur within same sex relationships and impact on those who are transgender. It is an issue, which cuts across all members of society and although the specifics may be different, the impact can be the same. See Appendix 1 of this guide for some 'myth busters'.

National figures for the extent of domestic abuse have been fairly static for the past few years and are not showing indications of decreasing.

With the continuing levels of domestic abuse experienced by adults across the country, it is likely that a proportion of our employees may be living in abusive relationships or being abused by ex-partners. In this context, the University wishes to support any employees who are faced with this situation. These guidelines are designed to help managers when faced with such a situation.

Initial operational action will be determined by the line manager, further employment advice can be sought from the [ER Employment Relations](#) team.

2. What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another within a family or between partners and can take many different forms including:

- Psychological – coercive control, for example, threats, humiliation, intimidation intended for the abuser to control what the other person does or thinks
- Physical – use of physical force such as hitting, pushing, and at an extreme requires hospitalisation
- Sexual – this is a form of physical abuse when sex is forced and non-consensual
- Emotional – for example, blaming, intimidation, isolating
- Verbal – yelling, name calling with the intention of frightening or humiliating
- Economic – preventing access to money or resources, for example, food, leading to concerns about health or wellbeing

The key element is that the abuser exercises control over the victim. This controlling behaviour can include:

- Physical threats and assaults controlling what the victim can do
- Isolating the victim from support
- Using the victim's resources or capabilities for their own purposes

- Depriving the victim of the means of independence, resistance, or escape
- Regulating the victim's everyday behaviour

These definitions also include coercive behaviour, which is an act or pattern of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim. The definition may also include:

- 'Honour' based violence – where women and men experience violence and threats at the hands of their family or community in order to protect their perceived 'honour'
- Forced marriage – where one party is threatened or bullied into making a marriage (this is distinct from an arranged marriage where both parties have a choice to accept the arrangement)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – a collective term for a range of procedures on female genitalia for non-medical reasons

It should be noted that these are not confined to one gender or ethnic group, culture, or faith group.

These definitions have been taken from a publication produced by the Metropolitan Police called [What is domestic abuse?](#)

Domestic abuse can also include stalking and there are specific criminal offences associated with this. It can also include publishing or threatening to publish intimate or other embarrassing material on social media or other electronic forms.

Although the majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, and predominantly younger women, it is important to bear in mind that victims can be anyone and it is helpful to understand the following points:

- Older women and men are less likely to report their experiences of domestic abuse
- Those with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic and sexual abuse
- Ethnic minority women can face additional barriers to accessing support, this may be due to cultural reasons or fear of the response they might receive
- The LGBTQ community can be vulnerable to abusers who threaten to 'out' them
- Transgender and non-binary people have fewer services and support networks available to them
- Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse
- Men experiencing domestic abuse find it more difficult to disclose abuse

A report from Public Health England, [Disability and Domestic Abuse](#), provides further information about the disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse on disabled people. The definitions and features of domestic abuse apply equally to disabled people, but the impact can be significantly greater. Additional considerations need to be given if an employee who is disabled approaches you regarding an abusive situation. In particular, they may have specific restrictions on their ability to leave the relationship, may be more isolated, and/or may be more dependent on the abuser.

3. Why does this concern an employer?

Most domestic abuse takes place within the home, and it is unlikely to be seen in the workplace (unless the victim and perpetrator work together – see section below). An employer does not hold responsibility for what is taking place in an employee's personal affairs or personal life outside of the working environment.

However, there can be an impact in the workplace when an employee is experiencing domestic abuse and we have a responsibility for the health and wellbeing of our employees. Therefore, if it comes to light that they are the victim of domestic abuse, that responsibility becomes relevant.

The University has a commitment to ensure staff feel supported in their working environment ([Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2020](#)). Therefore, where an employee needs support because they are experiencing domestic abuse, the manager should take appropriate steps to help them.

These guidelines are intended to help managers whenever any situation of domestic abuse arises in their teams. This includes when the individual is not a University employee, but is working in the team under another form of arrangement eg EPSRC placements. However, when the person concerned is not an employee of the University, but are hired via, for example, Unitemps or another agency, some of the possible actions may not be appropriate due to differences in their terms and conditions of employment; you should have a discussion with the agency involved before making any final arrangements in these cases.

4. Confidentiality and safeguarding

Safeguarding

Where an employee discloses a personal situation to their manager or another colleague this should be treated in confidence. In most situations, it will not be necessary to disclose this information to anyone else. However, if there are concerns about a threat to life, or possible threats to vulnerable adults or children, it may be that the obligation to report this over-rides any commitment to confidentiality.

As a manager, you may be approached by another employee who has been told something in confidence or observed something of concern about the safety of either another employee or their family.

Under these circumstances, legislation regarding 'Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk' may require action to be taken. Further advice on safeguarding can be found in the University's [Safeguarding Policy](#). If you have any concerns about what you have been told, then you should contact the University's Lead Safeguarding Officer for further advice.

Confidentially and access to University services

If the issues disclosed either to you or a colleague are not matters of safeguarding, you should maintain confidentiality and not share what you have been told with anyone else. It is important that if someone discloses something that is so personal to them, you do not undermine their confidence or make them feel more vulnerable by discussing this with other people. If you think that it would help for others to know about the situation then agree what can or cannot be shared with the employee before going any further.

If you feel that the employee might benefit from support of other University services eg HR or Occupational Health, you must discuss this with them and obtain their explicit consent for a referral. Without their agreement, you would potentially be breaching their confidentiality.

Access to counselling

If the employee feels they would benefit from counselling, they can approach the service directly without the need for a referral. Anything they tell a counsellor is treated confidentially.

5. Signs of domestic abuse

Every person's situation is different, and it is not helpful to make assumptions about the impact that living in an abusive situation can have on any individual. In some circumstances, there may be no evident outward signs of what is happening to them at home. However, there are some behaviours in the workplace that might give a manager or another colleague an indication that the employee is experiencing personal difficulties. Examples might include:

- Drop in performance – a previously well performing employee begins to make mistakes or miss deadlines
- Changes in behaviour – being agitated, irritable, short tempered, withdrawn, crying, or shouting
- Punctuality – arriving at work late or leaving early; taking long lunch breaks or other breaks during the day; late notice leave requests
- 'Presenteeism' – being in work for longer than necessary; excuses for delaying going home
- Receiving a high number of personal calls – either on mobile or work number, possibly requiring them to leave the workplace to take the call, with possible signs of distress during or afterwards
- Changes in routine – indications given to colleagues about changes or pressures in domestic arrangements eg picking up children, travel patterns, shopping, cleaning etc
- Physical appearance – maybe bruises or evident pain, wearing long sleeved clothes or other cover ups

Any of these indications may have an impact in the workplace, either in the performance of the individual or the team. Even though they may stem from something outside of the workplace, there is a responsibility placed on the University as an employer to take appropriate steps to address them. It may feel uncomfortable as a manager to initiate discussions that could be personal, however, these should not be avoided or ignored.

Although these are possible indications that someone might be experiencing domestic abuse, this **should not** be the immediate assumption, as the same indicators can arise from a number of different causes eg physical or mental ill health – of themselves or someone they care for, other domestic pressures, financial pressures, taking part in extreme sports, lifestyle changes etc.

Equally, someone experiencing domestic abuse may not demonstrate any evident outward indicators. There is no correlation between the severity of the domestic abuse and the extent to which these indicators are present. The response to domestic abuse is personal, and someone living with domestic abuse for a long time may have found coping strategies that means it does not impact them at work. Equally, someone initially experiencing domestic abuse may display intense changes in the workplace.

There are instances where an individual knows that they are being abused, but they are limited in their ability to change their circumstances. For example, they may not be in a financial position to leave safely, or they may be caring for a relative with dementia who lashes out. Sometimes even the fear itself stops them from leaving. It is important to respect that not everyone can leave an abusive relationship and they may not want to.

If you observe any of these signs in an employee, or they are brought to your attention by another colleague, your role is to talk to them about it, to be supportive and to understand what is causing the behaviour. It may be nothing to do with domestic abuse, but your role is to explain your concerns and observations of their behaviour to the employee. You must respect their privacy and if they do not wish to disclose any personal matters, whether of domestic abuse or any other situations, you should not pry. However, as a manager, it is also your responsibility to address performance and behavioural matters within the team and part of the conversation will include coaching and supporting the employee to address these.

6. Role of a manager

As a manager, you will already have a relationship with your employees and over time, this should have been established as supportive and trusting. If you are a new manager, or the individual has recently moved to your team, you will need to begin to establish this type of relationship as soon as possible. The LMA has some support resources available to help you - [Induction for new managers](#).

You may find that an employee discloses to you that they are experiencing domestic abuse. This disclosure may come in different ways.

- they may tell you directly through a 1:1 conversation
- you may have identified behaviour that concerns you (see section above) which leads to a gentle probing conversation
- another colleague might tell you about it
- you may observe events in the office/on site

You may feel at a loss about what to do and say. What is important is that you do not ignore or minimise what your employee tells you. You are not expected to be a specialist counsellor, but as a manager, you can use your existing skills and knowledge to help the employee.

The extent of any disclosure can vary. The employee may only tell you part of the problem. It may be something new or something that has been occurring for years. They may have recently taken action eg reporting to the police, or leaving the relationship, or they may be scared or unable to take action.

You may be shocked by what they tell you. A common reaction is to tell the person to leave the abusive relationship and immediately start to find solutions for them. This is not part of the role of the manager. A decision about reporting abuse or leaving an abusive relationship is for the individual to make and you should avoid expressing any view on this to your employee. Someone who is being abused is being denied the right to control their own life - you do not want to add to this by seeming to make decisions for them. There are other supportive actions that you can take within the context of the working relationship.

You should know that your employee may not welcome your involvement, especially at first. For some people work is a safe space and talking about abuse in their work environment denies them an escape. It can take a long time for a person to understand the nature of their abusive relationship and they may even react angrily when you try to talk to them. Along with crying, anger is a normal human reaction to fear, but the employee is still expected not to snap at you, customers or other employees. The best way to support your employee is to be a good and consistent manager who respects personal and professional boundaries.

We have included in the document a small number of relevant case studies to help identify key do's and don'ts in those situations. These are designed to help you to plan for the conversation or to help with pointers on things to think about next.

These are not based on any actual situations, but have been created to give a range of situations that you might encounter. They are presented here to help you think through some of the things that you might do – or not do if you find yourself helping an employee through a situation of domestic abuse.

It is hoped that the case studies can put the guidance into a 'real life' perspective so that you can relate it to something that you might recognise in your team.

7. What can I do?

Hold a positive conversation - firstly find somewhere private where the person can talk freely. In an office, it is best to choose a space that does not feel enclosed or public. You may want to use a meeting room or ask colleagues to leave an office so that you have an appropriate space. Clearly show that you are not taking a phone or laptop with you as this indicates that you are giving the individual your undivided attention. If you have to take a phone for emergencies, be absolutely clear about why you are taking the phone, so that the employee does not feel that your attention will be distracted. Leave it on a desk so that it is visible to both of you and give them your full attention.

On O365 Teams, be clear that you have set aside a specific time to talk to them, make sure that they are somewhere they can talk freely and are not overheard in their home environment.

Small actions can mean a lot to a vulnerable person, especially caring actions that would not usually be required because of your professional status. Things that you might want to think about are:

- Offering to make a cup of tea before you start the meeting
- How you sit together eg not behind a desk which can make the discussion feel more formal
- Body language, showing that you are listening
- Reflecting back to them to show that you have understood what they are saying
- Showing interest in them by genuinely asking how they are

Listen carefully and non-judgementally - you might already have great skills in this area, but if you are interested in developing them further, please have a look at these resources on the LMA Hub.

Start the conversation with indirect questions:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Your wellbeing is important and I have noticed that you seem very {distracted/tired etc) at the moment, is there something bothering you?
- Is there anything that you would like to talk to me about or that I can help you with?

Case Study

An employee comes into work quiet and withdrawn. She won't engage with her colleagues in normal office chat and snaps at them that they are being too loud. You notice that she has tried to cover a bruise with scarves and make-up.

Do...

- Set up a positive conversation environment
- Express concern about her well-being and whether she needs medical attention
- Offer support if she wants to talk about any concerns and ask if there is anything that you can do to help her
- If she tells you that she needs help, tell her about the helplines, web sites and other support that is available (see the end of this guidance document)
- Remind her about the University's EAP and Counselling Service
- Ask her for emergency contact details
- Reassure her that her contribution is needed, that she is not in any trouble at work and the team are there to support her

Agree...

- How she will keep you informed about her safety ie what she wants you to do if she does not attend work as expected
- Who you can call if you are worried about her safety
- Whether she is comfortable where she is sitting ie does she need to move somewhere that she can see the door or see people approaching her; if this isn't possible you may consider buying a mirror to reflect people approaching
- If she needs a break away from the office to talk to a trusted colleague
- What she wishes (if anything) to be shared with the team and how they can help her

Don't...

- Ask if her partner regularly hurts her
- Tell her not to put up with it
- Be outraged that her partner hit her over something seemingly petty
- Offer to ring a helpline on her behalf
- Offer to help her move out of her home
- Tell colleagues what is happening without her permission
- Demand answers if she insists it isn't abuse

Consider adjusting working hours - this could be a temporary arrangement to help the employee during a short-term situation or a longer-term/permanent arrangement, which can be agreed through the [Flexible Working Policy](#). For example, their childcare arrangements may have changed, and they need to start later or finish earlier.

Grant emergency special leave - if the employee needs time to make arrangements for accommodation or to move house for example, in the circumstances of fleeing domestic abuse, then paid special leave can be granted in accordance with the [Special Leave Policy](#).

Case Study

An employee emails you that she needs time off because she has to move into a refuge to get away from her abusive partner who has been hitting her. Finally, with the help of Woman's Aid, she has a plan for moving out, but it has to be done very quickly and at short notice. She has two young children who will move with her.

Do...

- Email her confidentially and privately about the situation, if she needs to talk ask if she is able/safe to talk face-to-face or via O365 Teams
- Ask her how much time she needs and when
- Ask her what other support she might need (ie changing working hours for childcare etc)
- Offer University support eg EAP, counselling, OH
- Reassure her that her contribution is needed and the team are there to support her

Agree...

- To use the Special Leave Policy and allow up to 5 days paid leave as needed for making practical arrangements
- To have further discussions about what support she might need in the future and about her welfare
- What (if anything) needs to be said to the wider team

Don't....

- Ask where she is going
- Ask what has happened to reach this point
- Offer to help her move
- Make judgements about the situation or the help she is getting

Contact details - make sure you have an emergency contact number for the employee that can be called in the event of an emergency at work, or if they do not come into work as expected. Agree an arrangement for contact/communication so that you are reassured about the employee's safety and an action plan for if you are concerned eg calling the Police, or trusted friend/family.

Physically protect employees – if the employee tells you that they are afraid the abuser will try and find them at work and they are scared of this, you should take this concern at face value ie you do not need to have evidence that this is a real threat. If the employee is disclosing a domestic abuse situation to you, they are unlikely to overstate their fear and they are asking for your help. Depending on the circumstances consider the following actions along with the employee:

- Removing them from being in a public place eg allocate them to work in a back office
- Move their work location (so the abuser cannot find them) or make sure they are not working alone
- Agree with a colleague that they will escort the employee to and from their car
- Change working hours/days so the abuser does not know when they will be in

In extreme circumstances, if the perpetrator has threatened to or has come onto campus and caused a disturbance, you should speak to the Security team. It may be possible to prevent the person from coming on University premises or other formal action, however, this must be done through Security and following appropriate procedures.

Case Study

The employee tells you that she has left her home and that her abusive ex-girlfriend has threatened to 'track her down at work and drag her back'. She is very scared. She works as a Cleaning Supervisor at one of the campus buildings so is often working and walking around on her own.

Do...

- Provide a safe confidential place to have a discussion
- Reassure the employee that you are taking what she tells you seriously and you will do what you can to help her
- Find out from the employee what the current situation is:
- *has she reported this threat to the police*
- *is she living in a safe place*
- *does the ex-partner know where she works*
- *where does she work (is it a back office, remote, front desk etc)*
- *is she safe getting from her car/public transport to the workplace*
- Offer support using the links below, including ensuring steps have been taken to protect her safety using the specialist services available
- Think about any other safety measures eg obtaining a personal alarm, obtaining emergency phone numbers
- Report the situation to Security, including a description of the ex-partner and discuss any further support that they could provide

Options to consider and agree...

- To move her to another building at a different part of the campus or another campus; she can carry on with her same duties; it may be necessary to swap with another Cleaning Supervisor
- Change her working hours so the ex-partner does not know when she will be on site
- What (if anything) to tell her colleagues so they understand the situation and will be vigilant
- Regular meetings to review the situation and ensure she remains safe

Don't...

- Offer to report this to the police (the employee must do this)
- Offer to intervene if the ex-partner does come on site; you should call Security

Other abusive situations

Sometimes, abusive behaviour which is normally confined to the domestic situation can spill over into the workplace. Examples that might arise:

- Perpetrators contacting people within the University with claims aimed to damage the employee's reputation
- Perpetrators contacting colleagues to extract information about the employee
- Perpetrator use of social media which continues the abuse and brings it to the attention of colleagues or yourself

Where something comes to your attention that impacts an employee, then it is important that you take it seriously and consider what action is required. In the first instance, you should talk to your employee; if something has come to your attention that they may not know about then you should tell them what has happened. For example, if you have received an email from their partner, you should immediately discuss this with them and agree what action should be taken.

Most employees will be shocked to find that their employer is being brought into something that is essentially a private matter. They may well feel ashamed and embarrassed. You should reassure them that this will be treated with confidentiality and then discuss with them the most appropriate way to deal with the situation. This could include making it clear to the perpetrator that they should not be involving the employer in a personal matter, reporting the matter to the police or to University Security if there is a threat of physical injury, or protecting the employee from exposure to the perpetrator.

If there is persistent contact via email, steps can be taken with IS and Security to block identified email addresses. If this feels appropriate and necessary, discuss this initially with University Security to determine the possible impact and to protect the employee.

If the employee has any significant concerns about being identifiable through the University web site, discuss with the employee the possibility of removing their name and contact details from the University look-up. This can be done through raising a request with the [IT Service Desk](#). Where there is a concern for the employee's welfare due to them being identifiable through other University web pages, it may be appropriate to contact the owner of those web pages to request references to the employee be removed or amended in the interest of their personal safety.

Case Study

An employee asks for a wage advance to pay for his bus fare (you know that he is on reasonable salary). He seems embarrassed and stressed to be asking you.

Do....

- Be clear from the outset that this is not possible within the University's payroll regulations
- Ask if he is able to get to work OK
- Ask if the situation is short-term or long-term
- Gently ask if he would welcome any financial advice (via the [Employee Hub - Budgeting Advice](#))

He reveals that his salary goes into his partner's account and she controls all the finances, they had a row and now she won't give him any money. He doesn't realise that this is financial abuse and is embarrassed that he's having to admit his 'failure' to you.

Do...

- Express concern that he appears not to be having a say in his household finances
- See if there are any short-term practical solutions eg car share, using annual leave, limited working from home (but see below)
- Ask if he wants to arrange a different bank account and help him to transfer the payment of his wages to this account
- Encourage him to speak to an agency who can give him specialist advice about financial management, for example [Money Advice Service](#) or [Money Saving Expert](#)

Don't...

- Belittle him or be judgemental about letting his partner be so controlling
- Agree that he has failed or suggest his partner is correct in any way
- Tell him that this is financial abuse and he should do something about it
- Offer to lend him the money that he needs
- Agree that he can work from home until he has the money, be clear that he has to find a solution to funding his transport into work

8. Working from home

When an employee is working from home, signs of domestic abuse are inevitably less visible. Preferring to work from home might be an indication that the abuser is controlling what the individual does. It is easier to control someone if they do not leave the house and the abuser can see what they are doing all day. It may also be so that visible signs of abuse (bruises etc) cannot be seen by others. Alternatively, it may be that the employee is particularly keen to come into the office rather than work from home. This might be so that they can escape from the abuser and see the workplace as a safe place to be rather than staying at home.

The same signs that are listed in Section 4 may be evident and, therefore, you are able to initiate the same conversations. Additional things to look out for are:

- Reluctance to come into the workplace, preferring to stay working from home
- Irregular working pattern which indicates they are not able to work at certain times
- Periods of time when you expect them to be working, but when they are not contactable remotely
- Evidence of partner/family member observing them whilst they are on calls/meetings

The University is moving towards an agile working culture, which is likely to see more people working from home for some part of the week where this is possible. When consideration is being given to the appropriate working arrangements for the team, it may be necessary to talk to individual employees about their preferences for working from home. The guidance above remains relevant. However, particular attention should be paid to people who are particularly reluctant or enthusiastic about working from home and reticent to adopt agile ways of working in any form.

Any such reluctance could be an indicator of a number of things and as such may not be an indicator that they are experiencing domestic abuse, however, if there are other signs of concern this could be a reason for rejecting any particular agile way of working. If such situations arise, they should be dealt with sensitively and the intention should be to agree working arrangements with which the individual feels comfortable and safe.

9. Domestic abuse perpetrators

It is possible that a member of your team may be an abuser. If you are concerned about things that they say openly about their relationship you might speak to them directly and explain what concerns you. You can direct them to the support resources below. However, it is not your responsibility to intervene or to pass judgement on their behaviour in a domestic situation.

If it comes to your attention that an employee has been charged with domestic abuse you should speak to them about this and whether it has any impact on their work. If the person they have abused also works for the University you may need to take specific action – see the section below.

Whilst on bail or under investigation for a police charge you are not required to take any action. Providing the employee can continue to come into work and perform their duties there is no additional action necessary. You, or other members of the team, may disapprove of what you think the employee has done, but there are no employment related consequences of their behaviour outside of the University at this stage.

In exceptional circumstances it might be that the behaviour of the employee, or the nature of the charges, do give you concern about their continued suitability for work. If this is the case, then contact [ER Employment Relations](#) for further advice. It is unlikely that suspension from employment will be an appropriate response but if there are circumstances that make their continued presence in the workplace untenable then options to resolve this can be sought.

If the employee is placed on remand, or ultimately found guilty and given a custodial sentence, it will be necessary to consider whether they can continue in employment. This will be on the basis of their inability to attend work, not because of the nature of the offence. If this situation arises, contact [ER Employment Relations](#) for further advice.

Case Study

The employee does not attend work, then rings to say they have been at the police station overnight.

Do...

- Agree how their absence from work is to be covered (eg annual, or unpaid leave)
- Ask when they expect to be in work
- Ask if they wish to discuss the situation and whether there is likely to be any long-term impact on work

When they come in the next day, they tell you that they are being charged with domestic abuse, they have been bailed and that there is an injunction on them going back to the family home. They are sleeping in their car.

Do...

- Encourage them to contact relevant support agencies as soon as possible
- Make it clear that they are still expected to attend work
- Ask what they expect will happen next and what timescales
- Treat everything confidentially and close down any speculation from colleagues
- Continue to treat them as a member of the team

Agree...

- Time off – annual or unpaid leave to make alternative living arrangements
- What - if anything needs to be shared with the wider team about their circumstances
- Regular opportunities for them to update you and for you to offer support

Don't...

- Assume that anything needs to change in the workplace – whilst the court case is progressing and a decision pending then they can carry on as usual
- Pass judgement on their behaviour; you may have a personal view about what they have done, but you should remain independent of this whilst managing the work situation
- Propose suspending the employee – unless there is evidence of an ongoing risk to others of them being at work

It is not automatic that if someone is charged, or receives a criminal sentence whether custodial or suspended, that they will be dismissed from their post; it will depend on the situation.

Perpetrating domestic abuse is not of itself a disciplinary offence if it arises outside the workplace, although there could be cases where a conviction for domestic abuse leading to a custodial sentence may be. There are possible links with the University's employment policies under the following circumstances:

- **Disciplinary Policy** - Perpetrating domestic abuse is not of itself necessarily a disciplinary offence if it arises outside the workplace. However, if the perpetrator receives a custodial sentence, then their absence from work may be considered a disciplinary matter. If their conduct breaks any University rules then there may be a disciplinary investigation.
- **Capability Policy** - If the perpetrator's work brings them into contact with vulnerable people, it may be appropriate to review their continued suitability for this work. This would follow a capability review and if there is concern, they may be offered redeployment or ultimately dismissed in the most serious situations.

10. Employees working together

Relationships in the workplace

The University recognises that personal relationships in the workplace occur and require them to be declared in line with the Personal Relationships Policy. In a case where both parties work for the University and domestic abuse becomes apparent, then there are further steps to consider. It is important not to be judgemental in ascribing guilt to one of the partners or another. You must remember that you are only seeing what either or both partners want you to know. Personal relationships are complex, and you are not expected to make any determination about which partner is right or wrong. Therefore, you must be careful not to respond to only one of the employees and disregard the views of the other.

Under circumstances where they both work in the same team and the impact of their relationship is spilling out into either their work performance or into the wider team, then you need to speak to each of them about this. You should speak to each of the employees separately so that you are confident they are not being influenced by their partner. Experiencing psychological abuse or coercive control can mean that the victim is unable to openly talk about what is happening, and indeed may not themselves realise how they are being controlled.

What to do if one of the partners is abusive

It may emerge that one of the partners is abusive, possibly because the police have been involved, or there might be physical evidence or potentially one of the partners has moved to a refuge. It is possible, therefore, that this is a breach of the University's Dignity Policy. If the victim wishes to make a formal complaint, this will be investigated under the terms of the Dignity Policy. You should discuss with the employee what their options are and how they might make a complaint. Depending on the circumstances, it may be that the perpetrator has breached the University's disciplinary rules (see above) and you might instigate a disciplinary investigation. If on reviewing the evidence that is already available to you, a formal disciplinary investigation would be appropriate, then you can instigate this without the victim having to make a formal complaint.

Redeployment

A dignity or disciplinary investigation might lead to a recommendation that the one of the partners is redeployed. Regardless of whether there is a formal recommendation, it is likely that where there has been domestic abuse, the partners will no longer be able to work together. The priority will be to protect the victim, and in which case it is likely that the perpetrator will need to be redeployed to either another role where they do not have contact with the victim, or to carry out the same role, but from a different location.

The exact solution will depend on the particular circumstances of the working relationship and alternative redeployment options available. The victim's wishes should be respected as a matter of priority, which might include a redeployment post for them. If it becomes necessary to consider redeploying one or other of the employees because they work in the same team, then you should contact [HR Employment Relations](#) for advice on the options available to you.

If the partners work in different teams, then it may not be necessary for either of them to move so it will depend on whether or not their normal work brings them into contact with each other. If they do work in different teams, and it is not feasible for them to continue a normal working relationship, then you and the other manager will need to work together to find a solution. This might include rearranging work duties to avoid them having to be in contact with each other or if this is not possible then to look to redeployment as above.

11. Support for managers

If you find yourself supporting an employee who is experiencing domestic abuse, or one who is a perpetrator of domestic abuse, this can potentially take an emotional toll on you personally. If you find yourself listening to upsetting accounts of situations, or helping a distressed employee, do not feel that you are on your own. You should speak to your manager – and whilst you may not be able to disclose anything said in confidence to you, you can explain to your manager why what you have been dealing with is causing you distress. Do not feel that you have to bear the burden alone. Ask for their support whilst you are helping the employee. You can get support from the following places:

- [ER Employment Relations](#)
- [Mental Health First Aider](#)
- [Togetherall App](#)

12. Support resources

University support for managers and employees:

- [University of Nottingham - Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [University of Nottingham Counselling Service](#)
- [University of Nottingham Chaplaincy](#)

For all victims:

- [Victim Support](#)
- [Citizen's Advice](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Police - Domestic Abuse](#)

Specifically for women:

- [Refuge - 24 Hour Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Women's Aid](#)

Specifically for men:

- [Mankind](#)

Specifically for LGBT community:

- [LGBT Foundation](#)

Specifically for perpetrators:

- [Refuge - help for abusers](#)

Myth Busting – Understanding the Real Facts

Myth: Alcohol and drugs are to blame.

Fact: Many people are abusive when they are sober. Most people who drink alcohol are not domestic abusers. Blaming drink or drugs is an excuse, a way of denying responsibility.

Myth: People who are being abused would leave if it was that bad.

Fact: It can be extremely difficult to leave an abusive partner. People experiencing domestic abuse may fear what a partner will do if they leave, particularly if the partner has threatened to kill her/him or the children. They may believe that staying is better for the children. Those who suffer abuse are often at the greatest risk of harm at the point of separation or after leaving a violent partner. The person experiencing abuse may feel ashamed of what has happened and believe it is their fault. They may hope that the partner will change, remembering good times at the start of the relationship and hoping they will return. They may not have access to money, or anywhere to go. They may not know where to turn for help, particularly if English is not their first language.

Myth: Abusers grow up in violent homes.

Fact: Growing up in a violent home is a risk factor, and some children who experience abuse do go on to be abusive in their relationships, but many do not. Instead, they may be repelled by violence because they have seen the damage it causes. Abusers may learn to be violent from the society within which they grow up, but people who blame violence solely on their childhood experiences are avoiding taking responsibility for their actions. Violence is a choice an abuser makes; they alone are responsible.

Myth: Some people like violence.

Fact: Most people who are abused live in fear of their abuser. This is a way of blaming the survivor for what is happening.

Myth: Some people ask for it. They get what they deserve.

Fact: Violence and intimidation are not acceptable ways to solve conflict in a relationship. People using abusive behaviours will often attack their partner for no apparent reason. Again, this is a way of making excuses for the abuser's behaviour. It allows an abusive person to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

Myth: People using abusive behaviours have a mental illness.

Fact: The vast majority of people who abuse are not mentally ill. Research shows that the proportion of abusers with mental health problems is no higher than in society as a whole.

Myth: Stress is to blame for domestic abuse.

Fact: Some people who abuse their partners do suffer from stress. Again, this is a factor – not the underlying cause of the abuse. Many people who are stressed are never abusive.

Myth: They lose their temper sometimes, that's all.

Fact: It often is said that people who use abusive behaviours “lose their temper” or are “out of control”. The truth is that they are very much in control. Abusers are usually selective about when they hit their partner, for example in private or when the children are asleep. They choose not to mark their face or other parts of the body, which show. They never “lose their temper” with other people. This suggests they are very aware of what they are doing and are “in control”. Many abuse their partners emotionally and psychologically, without ever using physical violence. This shows the extent of their control.

Myth: Domestic abuse is a private matter, you shouldn't get involved.

Fact: For far too long, domestic abuse has been allowed to happen behind closed doors. People think what goes on in the home is private, and not their problem. Domestic abuse is a crime wherever it occurs. It is against the law. We are all affected by domestic abuse; we all have a responsibility to speak out against it. Only then can we tackle it effectively.

Myth: Men can't experience domestic abuse.

Fact: Although women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, it is certainly a very real issue for male survivors too, in heterosexual, gay and other kinds of relationships.

Myth: Perpetrators of domestic abuse cannot change.

Fact: Perpetrators can change. Treatment and support is available.

Extract from BITC "[Wellbeing Toolkit Domestic Abuse](#)".