

# Dealing with domestic violence and abuse: first steps

THE NHS STAFF COUNCIL  
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING  
PARTNERSHIP GROUP

## 1. Know your responsibilities

Employers have a duty of care to the people they employ. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers are responsible for the health and safety of their employees, be it physical or emotional. This gives employers legal responsibility to act, should an employee be targeted at work in order to protect both the person involved and their co-workers.

## 2. Gain board/senior leadership buy-in

It is important to encourage the entire organisation to understand why domestic violence and abuse affects business and therefore help to support their staff. Gaining senior leadership buy in is integral to ensuring that your domestic violence policy and support are invested in. You can do this by presenting the business case to your board. Find out more about how to do this in partnership with staff side and the police service from **PHE's 16 days of Action toolkit**.

## 3. Create a robust policy in partnership

It is important to effectively implement a domestic violence and abuse policy. Not only will this help to assure employees that managers take the issue seriously, it also provides an effective tool to identify, assess and support staff in the workplace. The policy needs to be under constant and active implementation. If you do not have a policy in place, it is important to create it in partnership with management and staff side. Read our **policy guidelines document**.

## 4. Create a clear pathway for staff

Communication is key when thinking about domestic violence and abuse. It is vital that your staff know where to go to access support and that it will be confidential.

## 5. Train your line managers

Line managers have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of their staff. It is vital that line managers understand how to support their staff who may be victims of domestic violence and abuse and where to signpost. Create a training programme in partnership with staff side to help raise awareness of domestic violence and the impact it has, and the policies and support in place for staff. You can find advice about what to do when someone discloses in this **16 Days of Action toolkit from PHE**.

## 6. Raise awareness

You could use posters, newsletters and social media to help raise awareness of the support available. It's critical for people to know they are not alone and that their employer can help.