

# Domestic and Sexual Abuse



## Workplace Support Pack

**DOMESTIC ABUSE DOES NOT END AT HOME...**

**MAKING WORK A **SAFE** SPACE**

# Introduction

Domestic abuse is **alarmingly prevalent** in Northern Ireland. It is a serious and widespread problem that can have devastating consequences for those experiencing the abuse and their families.

NHSCT recognises the seriousness of domestic and sexual abuse. Through our Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support Policy and this corresponding support pack, we are making a continuing commitment to support employees who experience domestic and sexual abuse, raise awareness of abuse, and dealing appropriately with alleged or confirmed perpetrators of abuse within our workforce.

This Support Pack is a supporting document intended to be read alongside our **Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support Policy**. You can read the full policy on StaffNet.

## PSNI Statistics



32,875 domestic abuse incidents recorded in Northern Ireland.



A Domestic Abuse incident was reported once every 16 minutes.



There were 8 Domestic Homicides (5 female victims & 3 males).

(April 2022 to March 2023)

# What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic or sexual abuse involves the **abuse of power and control** by one person over another, within intimate relationships (current or former) or between family members (including child to parent abuse). It can be experienced by **anyone** and typically escalates in frequency and severity over time. Abuse can have a detrimental and long-term impact on an individual and presents a clear violation of their human rights.

The Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Justice (DoJ) are developing a new strategy for addressing domestic and sexual abuse in Northern Ireland: Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023 – 2030. You can read the strategy (currently in draft form) and its corresponding documents by clicking the link below.



[Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 23-30](#)



## Why is this a workplace issue?

One of the priorities of the new Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy is a commitment to improve awareness and understanding of domestic and sexual abuse in workplaces across Northern Ireland.

As a large public sector employer, we are committed to supporting any of our staff who are experiencing abuse sensitively, confidentially, and effectively, and are prepared to deal appropriately with alleged or confirmed perpetrators of abuse. We strive to nurture a safe workplace for all.

We recognise that home and work issues cannot always be separated and domestic and sexual abuse can impact greatly on the working life of someone who is being abused.

Abuse can negatively affect an individual's health and wellbeing and their enjoyment, attendance or performance at work may be impacted. An individual may even continue to experience abuse in the workplace e.g. offensive or threatening phone calls or emails. Furthermore, it can affect the safety and welfare of our employees and could ultimately affect service provision.



# How is abuse perpetrated?

**Domestic abuse can take many different forms. Abuse may include, but is not limited to:**



**Physical** - slapping, pushing, kicking, stabbing, damage to property, female genital mutilation, non fatal strangulation, attempted murder or murder.



**Sexual** - any non-consensual sexual activity including rape, sexual assault, coercive sexual activity, unwanted sexual touch, indecent exposure, refusing safer sex or removing contraception without consent.



**Coercive control** - controlling whom you see or where you go, what you wear or what you do, stalking, imprisonment, forced marriage.



**Emotional/Psychological** - intimidation, social isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, constant criticism, enforced trivial routines.



**Economic/Financial** - stealing, depriving or taking control of money, running up debts, withholding bank cards.



**Honour-based** - relating to alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour.



**Virtual/Technology-facilitated** - use of technology to coerce, stalk or harass another person, monitoring of social media profiles or personal devices, sharing intimate photos without consent, or using GPS trackers or spyware.

## Why does abuse happen?

Domestic abuse is...



- An abuse of power and control
- A desire for dominance and ownership
- A belief of rights of sexual entitlement

Domestic abuse is NOT...



- The fault of the person being abused
- Caused by alcohol or drugs
- A mental illness or caused by other mental health conditions
- Just an anger management issue
- Just against women
- Just between a romantic couple
- Something you can leave at home

## Why don't they just leave?

- Leaving a relationship does not always guarantee the abuse will stop.
- If a person is trying to leave, their perpetrator may become increasingly violent and high risk.
- The person may have caring responsibilities for their perpetrator.
- There may be barriers to leaving such as finances, accommodation, legal concerns, religion, immigration status, or children.
- The perpetrator may have stripped the person of their self-esteem and independence, reducing their means of escape.

# Who does abuse affect?

Domestic or sexual abuse can affect anyone, regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, community background, social or marital status, or occupation. Similarly, anyone can be a perpetrator of abuse. PSNI report that 83% of perpetrators are male, 15% are female and 1 in 4 reported cases include child to parent abuse. However it is recognised that domestic abuse is under reported particularly by men.

Furthermore, abuse can have a negative effect on the wellbeing of those who witness or are aware of it. For example, friends, family members or colleagues of someone who is being abused may feel heightened anxiety, fear or stress.



## Occupation

A [2016 report by the Cavell Nurses' Trust](#) suggests that 1 in 7 nurses, midwives and healthcare assistants in the UK have experienced domestic abuse in the previous twelve months and are alarmingly more likely to experience abuse than the average person.



## Women

Women's Aid report that 1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Also, PSNI statistics reveal that women are more likely to be victims of domestic homicide.



## Men

ManKind Initiative report that approximately 1 in 6 males will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. A study by MAPNI also revealed that men are much less likely than women to disclose or even accept that they are being abused.



## Age

Domestic abuse can affect or be perpetrated by any age group, including children and older people. Crime Survey for England and Wales report that 9% of abuse victims are aged 55+. NSPCC report that 1 in 5 children and young people have been exposed to domestic abuse and exposure to abuse is classified as child abuse.



## LGBTQ+

Galop report that 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ people have experienced domestic abuse from a family member. They also face unique barriers to seeking support such as not wanting to 'out' themselves or lack of specialist support.



## Disability

Disability Action report that deaf and disabled people are at a greater risk of domestic and sexual violence than people who are not disabled. They may also face unique barriers to seeking support or escaping abuse such as communication barriers or financial dependency.



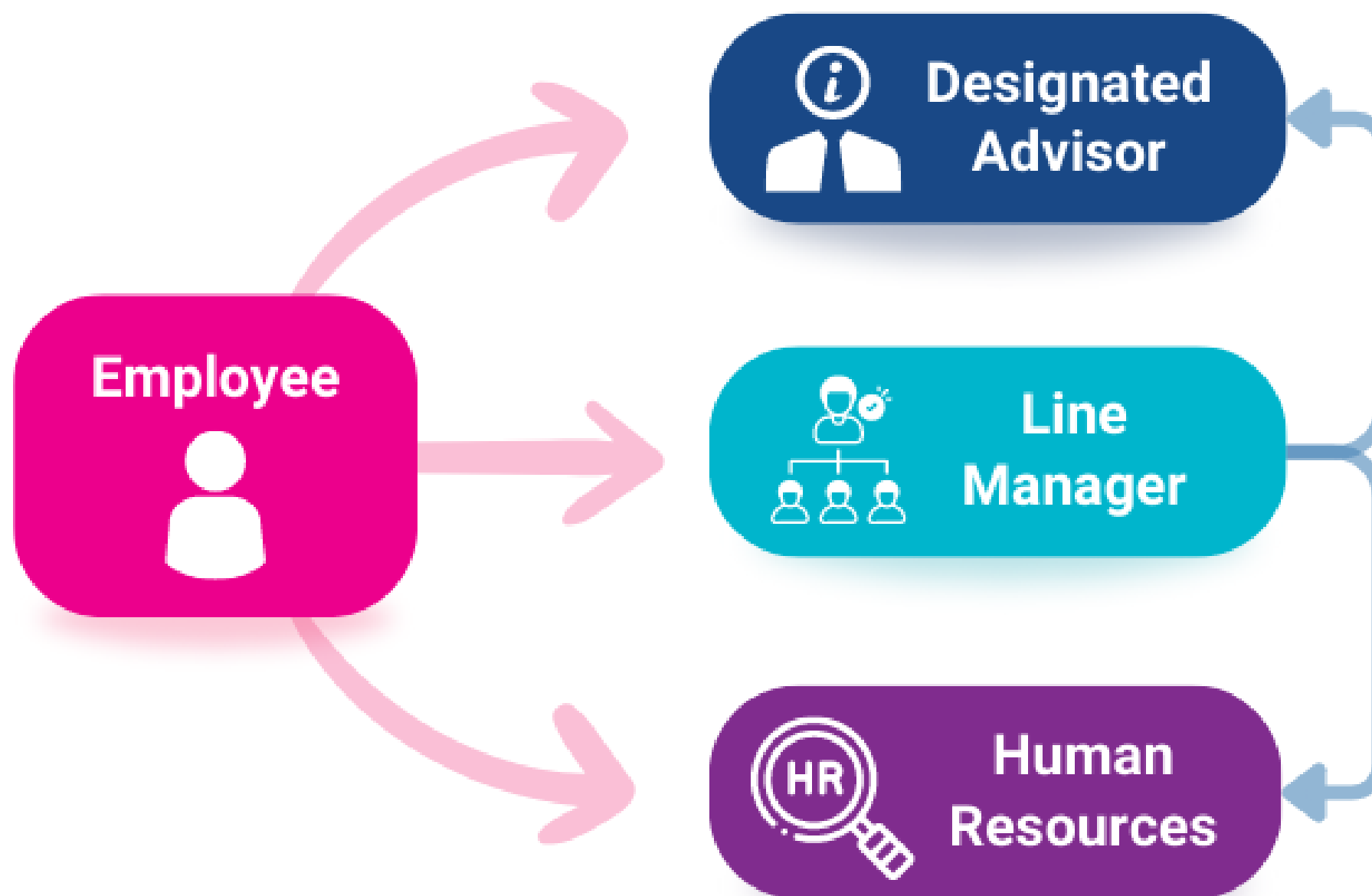
## Ethnicity and/or Religion

Spiritual abuse is a recognised form of domestic abuse and is not limited to a certain religion or denomination. Honour-based abuse is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of a family or community in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs.



# Pathways to Support

An employee can seek advice and support from their Line Manager **OR** HR **OR** directly from a Designated Advisor.



HR and Line Managers can advise the employee regarding the workplace policy. Line Managers can also seek advice from a Designated Advisor **OR** HR (maintaining confidentiality).

# Emergency Situations

Click on any of the icons for more information

**In an emergency where you need immediate assistance or feel threatened, please call 999.**

The following list outlines some of the alternative ways you can seek immediate support in an emergency situation.



## Silent Solution

If you are unable to speak, you can still call 999 from a mobile, then press 55 to be put through to the police. The police call handler will attempt to communicate with you by asking simple yes or no questions; they may ask you to cough or tap the keys on your phone to respond.



## Relay UK Relay Assistant or emergencySMS

If you are deaf or have hearing loss, you can dial 18000 in an emergency and follow the relay assistant's responses on the textphone screen. Alternatively, you can register for the emergencySMS service by texting REGISTER to 999. Click the icon to the left for more information.



## The Rowan Sexual Assault Centre

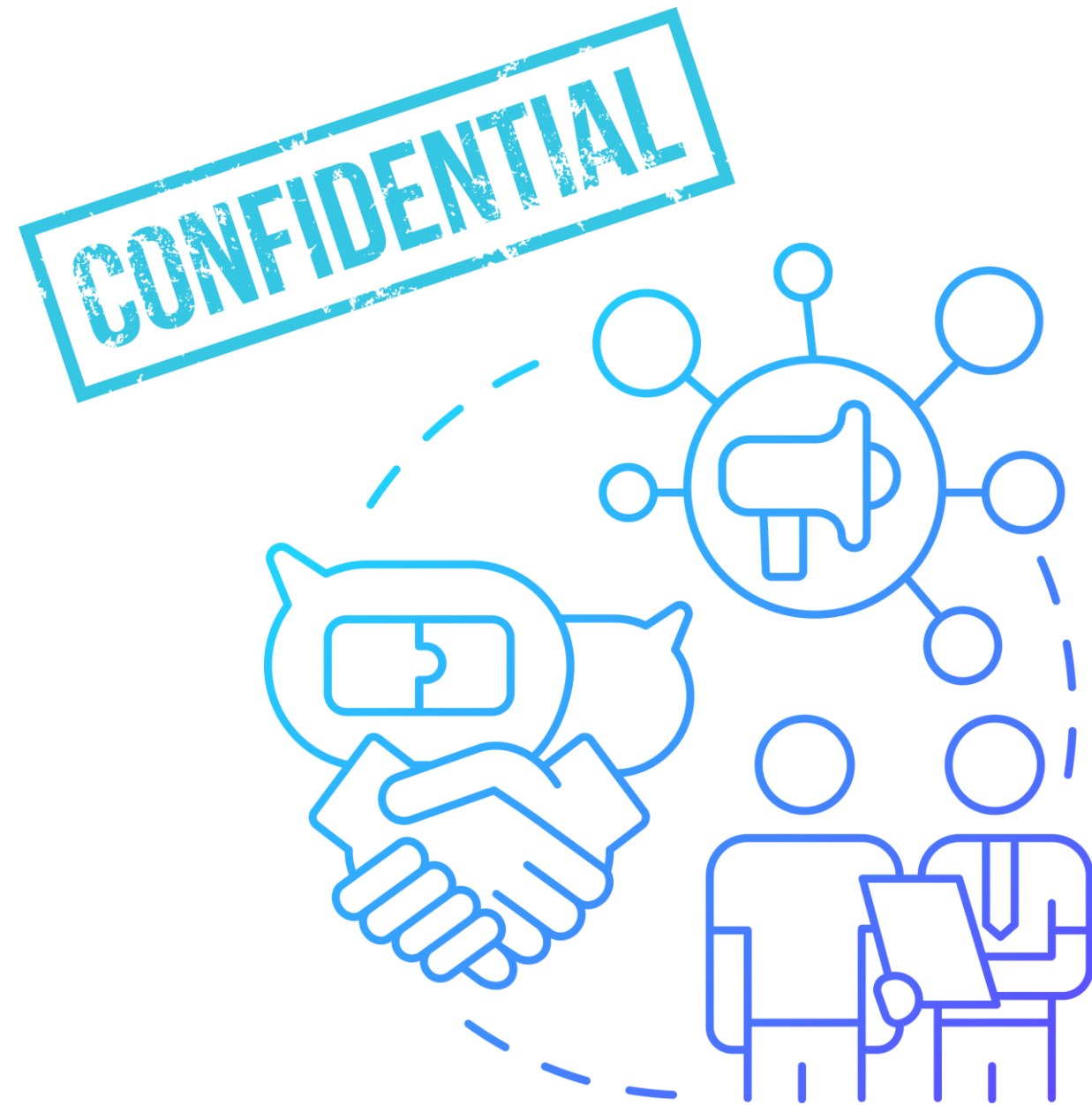
If you have been raped or sexually assaulted and don't wish to contact the police, you can contact The Rowan directly on 0800 3894424 for immediate support.



## 999 BSL Emergency Video Relay Service

If you use British Sign Language, you can download the 999 BSL app on your phone. The app can connect you via video call to a BSL interpreter for emergency situations.

# NHSCT Designated Advisors



Trust Designated Advisors (DA) are experienced domestic and sexual abuse practitioners employed by the Trust in various capacities. Their role as a DA is to provide a compassionate and non-judgmental listening ear for employees affected, to signpost employees and to conduct risk assessments where appropriate. They can also offer advice to Line Managers on what practical work adjustments may be implemented for someone experiencing abuse.

Our Designated Advisors are experienced in working with people experiencing abuse from a diverse range of backgrounds.

However, if you are in an emergency situation where you require immediate assistance please call **999** or the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline on **0808 802 1414** open 24 hours

# NHSCT Designated Advisors

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If you are in an emergency situation please contact 999 or the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline on 0808 802 1414.

If you require urgent workplace support please contact a Designated Advisor by telephone.

If emailing for non-urgent matters please insert 'DSA Workplace Support' as the subject matter.



# What are the signs of abuse?

- Changes to personality/mood - uncharacteristic fatigue, depression, anxiety, aggression, fear, mood swings, or obsession with timekeeping.
- Increased lateness to work or higher levels of absenteeism.
- Presenteeism, resistance to take leave, regularly working late or asking for excessive overtime.
- Secretive or reluctant to speak about their home life.
- Increasingly isolates themselves from colleagues.
- Changes in work quality or performance with no apparent reason.
- Upset or anxious after checking phone or taking phone calls.
- Needing regular time off for unexplained appointments.
- Repeated injuries or unexplained bruising (or explanations that do not match the injury).
- Changes in the amount of make-up a person wears or excessive clothing i.e. to cover injuries or bruising.
- Frequent visits to the workplace from the employee's partner/ex-partner.

## Remember!

This list is not exhaustive and every individual is different - some people experiencing abuse may display no signs or changes in their behaviour may be difficult to identify.



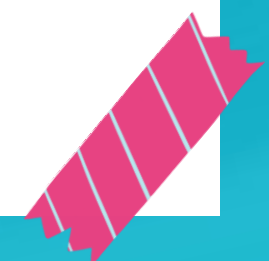
# Onus Safe Place Workplace Charter



"THE  
ONUS  
IS ON  
ALL  
OF US"

The Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence was established in 2010 to enable organisations, businesses, churches and communities to be recognised for their support to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse. We firmly believe in their ethos "The onus is on all of us" to play our part in supporting those affected.

In 2019, NHSCT were awarded a **Platinum Safe Employer Award** for our ongoing commitment to the Charter. We intend to uphold our commitment to this Charter by training a new, dedicated cohort of Designated Advisors, who will be passionate about and committed to supporting our staff and Line Managers. Furthermore, we will continue to offer a comprehensive training package in collaboration with Onus and regularly review our Domestic and Sexual Abuse in the Workplace Policy, making updates as necessary.



# Confidentiality and Consent

**We recognise that this can be a sensitive topic for any employee to disclose. Therefore, the Trust will ensure that confidentiality is prioritised where possible and all records concerning domestic or sexual abuse will be kept strictly confidential.**

We endeavor to ensure **all actions arising from disclosure of abuse are employee led.**

The Trust will endeavor to support employees but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in cases where a crime has been disclosed or where there is significant concern regarding potential serious harm to the employee or their colleagues. Similarly, in circumstances where it is identified that a child(s) or adult(s) at risk of harm or adult(s) in need of protection is at risk, then the Trust's responsibility for public protection may lead them to notify the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI). If this happens, the individual will be informed.

Employees should also be aware that any unauthorised breaches of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Please view our full statement of confidentiality in the Domestic and Sexual Abuse in the Workplace Support Policy.



# Line Managers

It is our hope that our managers will make a **managerial commitment** to support their staff who are experiencing domestic or sexual abuse. It is important to note that managers are not expected to be subject matter experts and/or counsellors. Line managers should not assume personal responsibility for a staff member who has disclosed abuse and should instead listen and signpost appropriately.

We expect our managers to have knowledge and understanding of the domestic and sexual abuse in the workplace policy and its corresponding support pack. We also encourage our managers to have the confidence to facilitate a discussion with an employee if they suspect they are being affected by abuse, or using Trust recourses to perpetrate abuse. A template form for managers is provided in Appendix 1 of the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support Policy.

We would encourage all managers to avail of our training packages (available through [HSC Learn](#)).





# Line Managers - Dos & Don'ts

## DO...

- Be compassionate, non-judgmental, practical, supportive and discrete.
- Prioritise safety and wellbeing over work efficiency or performance.
- Allocate some private time and space to listen.
- Signpost to specialist support and advice.
- Use discretion to work flexibly within absence and flexible working policies.
- Seek support from Designated Advisors or HR if needed.
- If the employee or any colleagues are in immediate danger, call 999.

## DO NOT...

- Seek proof of abuse.
- Contact the abuser.
- Compel a victim to accept support.
- Assume personal responsibility.
- Tell other colleagues without the employee's consent.



# Having Conversations about Domestic Abuse at Work

If you are concerned about one of your staff members, we would encourage you to have a wellbeing conversation with them. Below are some examples of how you might encourage a staff member to share with you. You may also find the Labour Relation Agency's '**Having Conversations about Domestic Abuse at Work Guidance**' a helpful resource. You can download the document by clicking the icon below.



I've noticed you seem distracted/anxious in work recently - is everything okay?

Is everything all right at home?

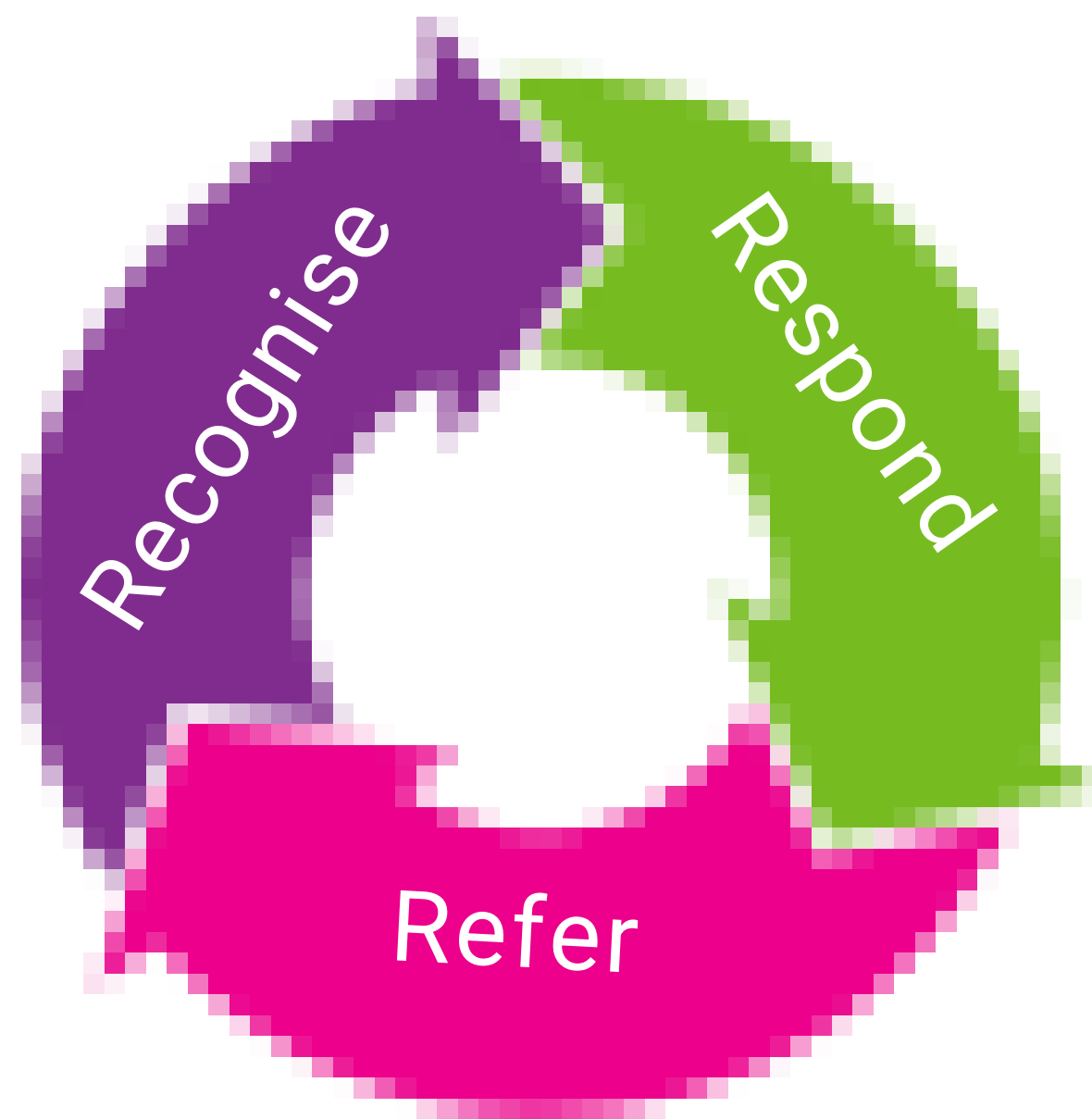
I can put you in touch with a Designated Advisor if you'd feel more comfortable talking to them.

How are you doing at the moment?

If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about, I'm here to listen and support you.

 [Access the Line Managers Template here](#)

# Responding to Domestic Abuse - The 3R's



## Recognise

By recognising the problem, particularly at an early stage, managers and employees can help 'break the silence' about domestic abuse in the workplace, which may encourage more people experiencing abuse to speak up and seek support.

## Respond

The NHSCT will ensure that our policies and procedures provide a supportive workplace that enables our managers to respond appropriately and compassionately to an employee who discloses abuse.

## Refer

Our managers will be equipped to signpost employees to a full range of internal and external resources and support services.

# Awareness of Risk

In following instances, employees who disclose abuse may be at an increased risk. Therefore, managers should ensure a safe form of communication is maintained with the employee and agree a suitable frequency of contact:



- **Maternity Leave** - pregnancy can be a trigger that starts domestic abuse, or existing abuse may become more frequent or severe. Around 30% of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy, while 40–60% of women experiencing domestic abuse are abused during pregnancy.



- **Holiday Periods** - one in six people experiencing abuse believe they're more likely to suffer emotional or physical abuse from their partner over the Christmas period. Victims may be more vulnerable to violence due to prolonged or increased contact with family and friends, alcohol consumption, increased risky behavior due to vacationing, financial stress or unique challenges during the holiday period.



- **Rural Address** - Abuse perpetrated in rural communities can last, on average, 25% longer than in urban areas. Rural communities do not have the same access to support services. People experiencing abuse who live in rural communities may be extremely isolated at home and rely heavily on their workplace as a safe space.

# Raising Awareness through Training

We have a comprehensive range of training offers available to our staff. To access the training, please click on any of the icons below.



## Domestic Abuse: Context and Change

HSC have developed a comprehensive e-learning package consisting of 4 modules: Prevalence, Legislation, Impact, and Pathways to Support. The e-learning is a useful resource for any staff member looking to increase their awareness.



## Level 2 Domestic & Sexual Abuse Awareness Raising

This virtual training is mandatory for staff who work in a patient-facing role but is also recommended to all staff wishing to increase their awareness.



## Level 1 Safeguarding Awareness Raising

All staff, regardless of job role, are encouraged to watch this video.



## Level 3 & 4 Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy

This in-person training is highly recommended for line managers so they can feel equipped to support staff members who disclose abuse.

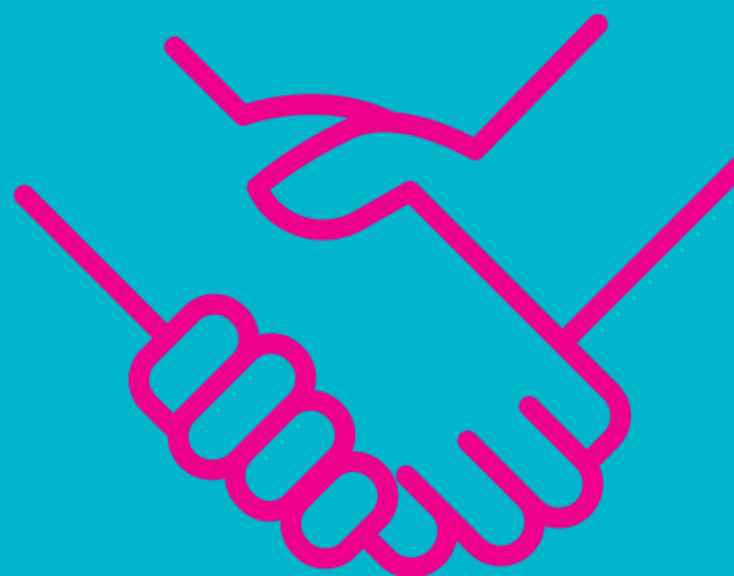
# Workplace Supports

Altering working arrangements on a short or long term basis. For example;

Changes to working hours or pattern through the Flexible Working Policy.

Avoid lone working by moving into a more suitable work environment e.g. communal space, or consider redeployment to a more suitable location or job role.

Decline Work from Home arrangements in favour of staying in the workplace.



Consideration to a salary advance if for example the employee is seeking alternative accommodation.

Practical safety measures.

Move work base away from reception or public area.

Change their work contact details i.e. email address or contact number.

Arrangements will be agreed on a case by case basis with line management. Advice and support is available from Human Resources or from a Designated Advisor.

# Safe Leave

The Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 was introduced into legislation to ensure employees who are experiencing domestic abuse are entitled to up to **10 days** paid leave in a 12-month period for purposes\* relating to domestic abuse. Whilst the regulations of this Act are yet to be established, NHSCT recognise the importance of this legislation in supporting staff affected by abuse.

As such, Safe Leave has now been integrated into our Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support Policy. Managers should seek advice about negotiating Safe Leave from HR or a Designated Advisor. Please note, this Leave will be under review and may be altered in line with the regulations of the Act.

\*Such circumstances include;

- Handling legal issues e.g. obtaining a restraining order, preparing for a court appearance, attending court or trial
- Organising to relocate somewhere safer i.e. a refuge or moving in with family or friends
- Receiving medical care for injuries sustained as a result of domestic abuse, sexual assault or other related issues.
- Attending counselling or seeking advice from social services or a solicitor.



H R P T S

**Recording**  
'urgent domestic distress' (WT 1320)

# Case Studies

## Sasha\*

At the end of the day, Sasha goes to the staff car park to discover her car has been vandalised. She suspects the person responsible is her ex-partner who has been stalking her since they separated. The site security guard knew Sasha's partner well so had let him into the car park, unaware they had separated.



The next day Sasha speaks to her manager who helps her develop a safety plan. Together, they arrange for Sasha to be accompanied to and from her car, and notified the security guard not to let Sasha's ex-partner in the car park and to immediately call Sasha's manager and the police if he did arrive. Sasha's manager also talks through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support Policy with her to ensure she's aware of other support available to her. As a result, Sasha felt much safer in her workplace and could focus better throughout the day.

## Ben\*

Ben and John\* are dating and they both work for the same organisation (in different areas). Recently, Ben had been receiving intimidating messages and emails from John on his work phone. Ben's manager noticed he was distracted in work and seemed anxious when he was on his work phone. The manager set up a meeting to chat with Ben in private, where the manager asked him how he was feeling and expressed concern for Ben's recent change in behaviour.

When Ben told his manager about John, the manager explained that John was breaking company policy by misusing company resources, and this needed to be reported to HR. Ben and his manager also agreed that any future emails from John would be diverted to the manager's account. The manager then shared the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy and Support Pack with Ben, who later decided to contact one of the Helplines for further support and advice about his relationship.



\*\*These are fictional characters but their scenarios are based on real events.



# Resources and Support Services

Click on any of the logos to find out more!

## INTERNAL



### Human Resources

028 9441 3232 (ext. 323232)  
[HR.Helpdesk@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:HR.Helpdesk@northerntrust.hscni.net)



### Inspire Wellbeing

0808 800 0002 (24hr)  
[hello@inspirewellbeing.org](mailto:hello@inspirewellbeing.org)



### Occupational Health

028 9442 4401 (Antrim)  
028 7034 7855 (Coleraine)



### Staff Health & Wellbeing Resource Hub

### [i-matter](#) Staff Wellbeing Hub

## REGIONAL - Northern Ireland



### 24-hr Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline

0808 802 1414



### Ask for Angela



### Assist NI

[info@assistni.org.uk](mailto:info@assistni.org.uk)



### Citizen's Advice Bureau



### Disability Action

028 9029 7880



### Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)



### Hourglass

0808 808 8141  
[nireland@wearehourglass.org](mailto:nireland@wearehourglass.org)



### [Men's Advisory Project](#)

028 9024 1929 (Belfast)  
028 7116 0001 (Foyle)





### Nexus NI

028 9032 6803  
[info@nexusni.org](mailto:info@nexusni.org)



### NI Council for Racial Equality

077 1076 7235



### PSNI

101 - ask for your local domestic  
violence officer



### Rainbow Project

028 9031 9030



### Rape Crisis NI

0800 0246 991



### Regional Emergency Social Work Service

0800 1979995 (out-of-hours)



### Safeguarding Board NI

028 9536 1810  
[SBNI.info@hscni.net](mailto:SBNI.info@hscni.net)



### The Rowan - Sexual Assault Referral Centre

0800 389 4424



### Talking about Stalking

0808 802 0300



### Victim Support NI

02871 370086



### Women's Aid

[028 9024 9041](tel:02890249041)  
[info@womensaidni.org](mailto:info@womensaidni.org)

Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne  
and Newtownabbey Branch  
028 2563 2136

Causeway Branch  
028 8676 9300

Mid-Ulster Branch  
028 7035 6573



## NATIONAL - UK-wide



**Bright Sky App**



**Nour**  
Muslim Domestic Violence Service



**Safe Spaces / Ask for ANI**



**Domestic Violence Assist**

0800 195 8699  
support@dvassist.org.uk



**NSPCC**  
[0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000)  
help@nspcc.org.uk



**Surviving Economic Abuse**



**Galop LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline**

0800 999 5428



**Refuge Women's Domestic Violence Helpline**

[0808 2000 247](tel:08082000247) (24hr)



**The Survivor's Trust Rape and Sexual Abuse Helpline**

08088 010818



**Karma Nirvana - Honour Based Abuse Service**

0800 5999 247



**Respect Perpetrator Phonenumber**

0808 8024040



**National Centre for Domestic Violence**

028 9441 3644



**SafeLives**

**Please note that you can also get advice and support from your Trade Union.**

