

Bristol City Council

Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy & Guidelines

Contents:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Guidelines for managers](#)
3. [What you can expect as a victim/survivor of Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
4. [What you can expect if you perpetrate Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
5. [Guidance for colleagues](#)
6. [Appendices](#)

Introduction:

Bristol City Council is committed to tackling all forms of violence and abuse; including violence and abuse against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence against men. It is therefore crucial to treat cases of domestic violence and abuse experienced by employees seriously.

Bristol City Council recognises that its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic violence and abuse, either as survivors/victims of domestic violence and abuse, friends, family or colleagues of victim/survivors, or perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.

Bristol City Council is committed to ensuring a safe workplace and to safeguarding the health and well-being of employees. As such, Bristol City Council is committed to developing a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for violence and abuse and which recognises that the responsibility for domestic violence and abuse lies with the perpetrator.

This document outlines the role of Bristol City Council in supporting employees who have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence and abuse and where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic violence and abuse.

Definition:

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is defined by Bristol Against Violence and Abuse (previously BDAF) as:

- The misuse of physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and/or financial control by one person over another who is or has been in a relationship. This includes family members
- DVA covers a wide range of behaviours and may be actual or threatened
- DVA includes forced marriage, so-called “honour”-based violence, and female genital mutilation
- DVA also includes the use of children to control an adult victim
- Because of this, child abuse and domestic abuse can overlap
- DVA is usually perpetrated by men against women, but not exclusively
- DVA is a continuing pattern of events, behaviour and coercive control

DVA occurs in all groups and sections of society and may be experienced differently, due to, and compounded by gender and gender identity, race, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, culture, class or mental health.

Both local and national strategy places DVA within the wider agenda of violence and abuse against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence against men (VAAWG).

VAAWG includes:

- domestic violence and abuse
- sexual violence

- forced marriage
- female genital mutilation
- human trafficking
- prostitution/sex work
- sexual harassment.

As such, it is important that all efforts to address DVA are placed within this agenda. The VAAWG agenda recognises that men and boys are also victims of abuse, and that appropriate responses are necessary.

UK Statistics:

- Nearly 1 million women experience at least one incident of domestic violence and abuse each year¹. 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence and abuse in their lifetime
- At least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence and abuse²
- Two women are killed each week by their partner or ex-partner³
- 76% of all domestic violence and abuse incidents are repeat incidents⁴
- In 2008/09 domestic violence and abuse accounted for 68% of female homicides and 15% of male homicides⁵

Domestic violence and abuse and same-sex relationships:

Domestic violence and abuse is as common and as severe among same sex couples as among heterosexual couples. There is, however, a general lack of recognition that same sex domestic violence and abuse can occur. For example, same sex domestic violence and abuse is rarely acknowledged in the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) community, by social policy makers, lawyers, or health care practitioners. This lack of visibility makes it difficult for LGB people to report incidents of domestic violence and abuse or feel protected by structures that exist to protect them.

LGB people are less likely to tell someone that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse for a number of reasons. LGB people who work in an environment where no one knows their sexual orientation may be particularly reluctant to disclose DVA for fear of discrimination. Where LGB people are 'out' at work they may be reluctant to demonstrate a problem within a relationship, if they think that their manager or work colleagues think that gay relationships are generally unstable or unsustainable. LGB people

¹ 2009/10 British Crime Survey data: <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf> as reported in latest cross-government VAWG strategy

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-paper?view=Binary>

² Department of Health, (2002) Women's Mental Health : Into the Mainstream

³ Women's Aid (March 2011) accessed at: <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1280>

⁴ Flatley, Kershaw, Smith, Chaplin and Moon (July 2010) BCS - Crime in England and Wales 2009/10 , Home Office, accessed at <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf> p24

⁵ Walby, S., Armstrong J. and Strid, S. 2010. *Physical and Legal Security and the Criminal Justice System: An analytical research overview*. UNESCO Chair in Gender Research Group. Lancaster University.

may not want to perpetuate that view by admitting domestic violence and abuse.

When dealing with a disclosure of DVA from an LGB employee, particular care must be taken to ensure the employee's sexual orientation is not disclosed to other colleagues without their permission.

Domestic violence and abuse experienced by transgender people:

The terms transgender and trans are umbrella terms encompassing a diverse range of people who find their gender identity does not fully correspond to their sex at birth. Trans people can experience domestic violence and abuse from a same or opposite sex partner, regardless of the gender identity of either person.

Trans people may experience many of the same barriers to disclosure as those outlined above, but also face additional and unique barriers. An abuser may threaten to disclose the victim's gender identity to their employer, family or community without their consent, which can act as a deterrent to seeking help. Trans people may also fear discrimination when accessing services, especially single sex services which may be inaccessible for some trans people.

Domestic violence and abuse in the workplace:

Domestic violence and abuse can impact greatly on an individual's working life, affecting productivity, emotional, mental and physical health.

Employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse may receive repeated or harassing communication, or unannounced visits at work from their partner or ex-partner. Individuals may also be stalked, harassed or assaulted while travelling to and from work.

Domestic violence and abuse can also be the cause of various mental health issues, and victims sometimes use alcohol or other substances to cope with the abuse. These factors are also likely to impact on an individual's ability to function as normal at work.

The workplace can be a place to escape violence but also somewhere the perpetrator can locate the person experiencing violence. Perpetrators may be able to use workplace resources – phones, email or other means to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partners⁶.

- 53% of victims of domestic violence and abuse are absent from work at least three days per month⁷
- 56% of abused women arrive late for work at least five times per month⁸

⁶ EHRC Breaking the Silence on Violence, Domestic Abuse is your business

⁷ Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence www.caadv.org.uk

⁸ Ibid

- 75% of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work – from harassing phone calls / text messages and emails to abusive partners arriving at the offices, often leading to physical assaults and in some cases homicide at the workplace.⁹

Business Case:

Domestic violence and abuse has a huge impact on victims' and their families' lives, including their working life. Many victims suffer physical injuries, sleep deprivation, low self-esteem, poor confidence, increased anxiety and other mental health issues. All of these can have an impact on individual's performance at work including lateness, absenteeism, poor performance, and exhaustion.

What is the evidence for needing action in the workplace?

- Domestic violence and abuse currently costs UK businesses over £2.7 billion a year
- In the UK in any one year, more than 20% of employed women take time off work because of domestic violence and abuse, and 2% lose their job as a direct result of the abuse
- Statistically, 25% of Bristol City Council's female employees and at least 10% of both male and female employees are likely to experience domestic violence and abuse.

(statistics from <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>)

Tackling domestic violence and abuse can therefore have considerable benefits to the organisation. Offering support to victims can ensure that valued employees are retained and their performance sustained. Taking a zero tolerance stance to violence and abuse, including addressing the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse can also ensure that the organisation's reputation is upheld as an employer that values and safeguards its employees.

Scope of this guidance:

This guidance applies to survivors of domestic violence and abuse, current victims of domestic violence and abuse, and perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. This guidance also applies to managers and colleagues of the above individuals. This applies to staff across all sites as well as agency and contract staff.

9 Ibid

Guidelines for Managers:

Domestic Abuse is often perceived as a private matter, rather than a workplace issue and managers may be reluctant to raise the issue with employees for a range of reasons including not knowing how to respond. However surveys show that victims of DVA overwhelmingly welcome workplace support and that this can make a real difference to their lives.

Employers have an important part to play in referring victims and perpetrators of DVA to specialist organisations, helping them access the range of support they need and putting in place measures to increase their safety.

Refuge and Respect, two leading DVA charities, recommend that all people managers are able to:

- **Recognise** the problem (look for signs and ask)
- **Respond** appropriately
- **Refer** on to appropriate help
- **Record** the details

Recognising DVA:

Employees who experience domestic violence and abuse may not tell people at work about their situation. It is more likely that a manager will become aware of the situation through associated issues such as absences or poor performance.

The following are signs that an employee could be experiencing domestic violence and abuse. They may also be indicative of other concerns.

Work productivity signs

Persistently late without explanation or with unusual explanation, or needing to leave work early

High absenteeism without explanation or with unusual explanation

Changes in quality of work performance for unexplained reasons

Increased time being spent at work for no apparent reason i.e. arriving early and leaving late

Upset at work due to receipt of upsetting emails, texts, phonecalls.

Psychological signs

May cry or be anxious at work

Uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction, problems with concentrating

Changes in behaviour; may become quiet and withdrawn and avoid interacting with colleagues.

Fear or partner/references to anger

Expresses fear at leaving children home alone with partner

Physical signs

Repeated injuries such as bruises; explanations for injuries that seem implausible

Frequent and/or sudden/unexpected medical problems/sickness absence

Fatigue

Change in the way an employee dresses i.e. excessive clothing in summer; unkempt or dishevelled appearance

Change in the pattern or amount of make up worn¹⁰

Other Signs

Receives constant phone calls from partner/ex-partner

Partner meets employee outside work regularly

Employee appears anxious about leaving the premises

Employee appears anxious about leaving work on time

Managing Performance/Attendance

Managers should be aware of the possibility of domestic violence and abuse when implementing the [Managing Attendance Policy and Procedures](#). If the manager suspects domestic violence and abuse could be the cause of absence they should try to create a supportive environment in which the employee is able to disclose the abuse if they wish to do so. The manager should consider whether it is appropriate to issue sickness absence warnings where the known cause is domestic violence and abuse.

Similarly, in applying the [Improving Performance Procedure](#), managers should be aware of the possibility of domestic abuse being a factor.

The focus should be on supporting rather than penalising or putting additional pressure on employees affected.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy can be a trigger for DVA. Research suggest that 30% of DVA starts in pregnancy¹¹. In relationships where DVA already exists, domestic violence and abuse can become worse in pregnancy. See the [Maternity and Caring Employees Scheme](#).

Creating a supportive environment

There are a number of things managers can do to create a safe environment for an employee to disclose abuse and feel that they will be supported if they do. Employees will feel more able to disclose if they know their manager understands and is sympathetic in their approach to issues of domestic abuse. Displaying posters and leaflets in the workplace can demonstrate this. Further guidance about creating a supportive environment can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

¹⁰ Adapted from Refuge + Respect's Domestic Violence Resource manual for Employers

¹¹ Lewis, Gwyneth, Drife, James, et al. (2001) Why mothers die: Report from the confidential enquiries into maternal deaths in the UK 1997-9; commissioned by Department of Health from RCOG and NICE (London: RCOG Press);

Ask the question

Often a manager or work colleague may suspect that there is a problem at home but is afraid to raise it. However, research shows that victims of DVA wish someone had asked them about it. If a manager suspects an employee may be being abused at home, raise the issue with them in a private location. Use non-threatening questions, e.g. 'Is everything okay at home?' 'How are things with your partner?' If the employee has obvious bruising or injuries then ask direct questions, e.g. 'I saw that you have bruises – I'm worried about how you got them. Would you like to talk about it?' or 'I'm worried about you because ...'

The employee might not be willing to talk straight away. If this is the case let the employee know that if they want to discuss any matters that might be affecting them in future that they can talk to you.

Further guidance on asking individuals about domestic violence and abuse can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Respond appropriately:

The Role of the Manager

If you are aware that someone is in immediate danger, you should call the appropriate emergency service on 999.

It is not the responsibility of the manager to stop the abuse or help an employee escape from an abusive relationship. The most effective role an employer can play is to signpost the employee to the agencies in Bristol who have the expertise to assist and provide on-going specialist support.

However, under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and [the Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare Policy](#) employers have a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. The management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992) requires employers to assess the risk of violence to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety.

If an incident occurs at work, follow it up under [the Violence and Aggression Policy](#).

What action should a manager take when an employee discloses experiencing abuse?

If an employee discloses that they are experiencing DVA it is very important that they are believed – do not ask for proof. Avoid passing judgement on the perpetrator's behaviour or the victim's response. It is important to understand that leaving an abusive relationship is a very difficult thing to do. On average victims of domestic abuse experience 35 incidences of DVA before seeking assistance¹². Where possible, you should always support a victim on his or her own terms.

¹² *Yearnshaw 1997, accessed at <http://safer.sthelens.gov.uk/SITEMANV2/publications/40/0901316LeafletsforDVVictims>*

Confidentiality

The manager has responsibility for ensuring that confidentiality is maintained at all times and that information about domestic abuse is only shared with other practitioners where this is necessary and where the employee has given permission. The exception to this is when the employee gives information that suggests a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of 'significant harm'. In these circumstances the manager must inform Children's Social Care or the Safeguarding Adults team.

Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure files containing information about those experiencing domestic abuse do not contain details of current addresses. Addresses may need to be held separately to ensure the abuser has no way of accessing them.

The manager should be aware that there may be employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse and that confidentiality is of paramount importance as both victim and perpetrator may be employees.

Planning for Workplace Safety

Once a manager is made aware of domestic abuse they should encourage the employee to contact a specialist DVA agency who will be able to carry out a specific DVA risk assessment as well as providing practical and emotional support.

The manager must also discuss the employee's safety at work and should carry out a risk assessment to ensure that the potential risk to the employee and work colleagues is minimised. When planning for workplace safety consideration should be given to the possible safety steps listed in [Appendix 5](#).

Colleagues

Advise colleagues on a 'need to know' basis with the employee's consent and agree a response if the perpetrator contacts the workplace.

With the employee's consent share the perpetrator's photo and details of the perpetrator's car with colleagues and security staff so that they can recognise the abuser.

Remind all staff never to divulge personal information about employees to callers (e.g shift patterns, addresses, telephone numbers etc). Never tell the caller where the employee is and what time they'll be back or tell the caller that the employee is on leave.

Time Off

Explore leave options with the employee, starting with paid leave. The employee might need time off to deal with a range of issues such as counselling, visits to support agencies, GP, police, solicitor, childcare, housing. Managers have discretionary powers to allow reasonable time off for appointments.

Where domestic abuse impacts on the employee's children the employee may need to be granted leave under the [Maternity and Caring Employees scheme](#) or as emergency care leave under the [Leave Policy](#).

Unpaid leave should be considered after paid leave options have been exhausted.

Financial Assistance

If an employee is being denied access to their finances by an abusive partner, the manager should consider changes in the employee's arrangements for payment. This could be particularly important if the employee is planning on leaving the abusive partner. Options available include:

- Preventing a salary from going to the nominated bank account up to 48 hours prior to payday. Pay can be held until a new account is nominated.
- The employee can be paid by cheque until a new account has been nominated.

Any changes to salary payments should be arranged confidentially with Payroll and the manager should ensure that payment **can** be made on the appropriate date **before** confirming this with the employee.

Unions may be able to offer loans to their members; it is worth discussing this with your union representative.

Refer to Specialist Services:

Providing Information

The manager should make available sources of support and services for employees affected by domestic abuse. A full list of support services is available in [Appendix 1](#).

It is also worth exploring the support options offered by Bristol City Council, for example, housing services.

Providing access to counselling

[Occupational Health](#) offers a counselling service for employees. Managers need to complete a referral form and should be prepared to let employees access counselling during working hours.

Record Information:

It is important to record concerns or disclosures of DVA accurately and confidentially. Full guidance is included in [Appendix 6](#).

Employees who Perpetrate DVA:

Recognising employees who perpetrate DVA

You may have concerns that an employee is a perpetrator of DVA if:

If an individual directly discloses perpetrating DVA,

An employee raises concerns about a colleague's possible abusive behaviour, or

An employee discloses being a victim of DVA and the perpetrator is also an employee.

If an employee suspects a colleague may be perpetrating DVA they should approach their manager. The primary concern should be the safety of the victim. The Council's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) aims to reassure employees that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

Respond

The primary aim in responding to employees who perpetrate DVA should be to increase safety and promote help seeking by the employee. Engaging with perpetrators in a positive, respectful way does not excuse the abuse and may help the perpetrator to engage with local support agencies which may in turn increase the safety of the vulnerable partner.

If the employee gives information that suggests a child or vulnerable adult are at risk of 'significant harm'. In these circumstances the manager must inform Children's Social Care or the Safeguarding Adults team.

If a manager is made aware of concerns that an employee is perpetrating domestic violence and abuse by another employee, they should not take any actions that could lead to repercussions for that individual.

A full list of support services, including services for perpetrators is available in [Appendix 1](#).

Taking disciplinary action

DVA is a serious matter that can lead to criminal conviction. If an employee is charged with a criminal offence relating to DVA this may constitute a breach of the Council's [Code of Conduct](#).

Section 9.1 of the Code of Conduct states:

Serious misconduct or criminal offences, committed during or outside working hours, which bring the employee or the Council into disrepute will also be subject to disciplinary action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and may result in dismissal.

Situations where both the perpetrator and victim are employees

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator are employees of Bristol City Council, appropriate action should be taken. The safety of the victim should always be prioritised and action should be taken to minimise risks.

Disciplinary action may be considered against the employee who is perpetrating abuse. Action may also be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or Bristol City Council's resources to further abuse or to locate the victim. Any decisions should be taken in partnership with the victim/survivor.

Couple counseling or mediation is never a recommended course of action where domestic violence and abuse is present.

Resignations and compromise agreements

All allegations will be followed up regardless of whether or not the employee accused of perpetrating DVA resigns or refuses to co-operate with the process. 'Compromise agreements' will not be used when there has been an allegation of DVA.

Where suspension/termination of employment is being considered, the manager should first speak to specialist DVA services (see [Appendix 1](#)) to see if support mechanisms can be put in place to ensure the safety of the vulnerable partner, as the risk of reprisals and further harassment may increase if such action is taken.

References

If an employee who is suspected or proven as a perpetrator of DVA leaves the Council, a manager has a duty to give a fair and accurate reference to any new employer. Allegations cannot be mentioned in a reference unless proven. Details of disciplinary action can be disclosed in a reference and the manager can suggest that future employers request an enhanced CRB check.

Refer

The employee should be provided with sources of support - given in [Appendix 1](#). The Respect Phonenumber is a confidential helpline for domestic violence and abuse perpetrators ([male](#), [female](#), in heterosexual or [same-sex relationships](#)).

Record

It is important to keep confidential written records if an employee discloses abusive behaviour or if an allegation is made that an employee is a perpetrator of DVA. Records may be used in legal proceedings by the police or victim. Further guidance about recording disclosures is available in [Appendix 6](#).

Training for Bristol City Council employees

Free basic awareness training is offered by the Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum (BDAF) as well as more in-depth training for a small charge. For further information, visit their website <http://www.bdaf.org.uk/professionals/training>. It is also possible to discuss bespoke training sessions with BDAF to meet your own needs.

What you can expect as a victim/survivor of domestic violence and abuse

Support

Bristol City Council is committed to ensuring that anyone disclosing domestic violence and abuse will be believed and supported.

Employees who disclose domestic violence and abuse to a manager can expect a sensitive and non-judgmental response and be able to discuss how the organisation can support them.

Remember:

It is not your fault
You will be believed
There is support available

Employees can expect Bristol City Council to support them to access confidential help and support if they want to.

Bristol City Council recognises that becoming free from abuse is a process that can take a long time, and will not judge any decisions made by employees, but will provide ongoing non-judgmental support.

Sources of support available in Bristol are listed in [Appendix 1](#).

Confidentiality

Employees who disclose experiencing domestic violence and abuse can expect that any information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

In circumstances where there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, confidentiality cannot be assured. However, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously.

Right to privacy

Whilst Bristol City Council is committed to creating a workplace environment that enables victims of domestic violence and abuse to disclose, it also respects employees' right to privacy and will not force individuals to share this information if they do not want to.

Anti-discrimination

Employees can expect that by disclosing domestic violence and abuse, they will not be discriminated against both in terms of current employment or future development. Employees who disclose domestic violence and abuse will not be disciplined for refusing or rejecting support.

Safety planning

Employees disclosing domestic violence and abuse can expect that their safety will be prioritised. Steps should be taken to minimise risks in the

workplace, you should be included in these decisions where possible. Possible steps that could be considered are listed in [Appendix 5](#).

Time Off

You might need time off to deal with a range of issues such as counselling, visits to support agencies, GP, police, solicitor, childcare, housing. Managers have discretionary powers to allow reasonable time off for appointments and you should feel able to discuss this with them.

Where domestic abuse impacts on your children, you may need to be granted leave under the [Maternity and Caring Employees scheme](#) or as emergency care leave under the [Leave Policy](#).

Unpaid leave can be considered after paid leave options have been exhausted.

Financial Assistance

If you are being denied access to your finances by an abusive partner, your manager should consider changes in your arrangements for payment. This could be particularly important if you are planning on leaving your partner.

Options available include:

- Preventing a salary from going to the nominated bank account up to 48 hours prior to payday. Pay can be held until a new account is nominated.
- Being paid by cheque until a new account has been nominated.

What you can expect if you perpetrate domestic violence and abuse:

Domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by employees of Bristol City Council will not be condoned under any circumstances. Bristol City Council requires perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse to declare any related prosecutions.

DVA is a serious matter that can lead to criminal conviction. If an employee is charged with a criminal offence relating to DVA this may constitute a breach of the Council's [Code of Conduct](#). All allegations of DVA will be followed up.

Employees who are concerned about their abusive behaviour can expect to be able to disclose this in confidence. There is help and support available and employees can expect to be supported by Bristol City Council to access it if they want to.

Sources of support available in Bristol are listed in [Appendix 1](#).

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator are employees of Bristol City Council, appropriate action will be taken. The safety of the victim will always be prioritised and action should be taken to minimise risks. Disciplinary action may be considered against the employee who is perpetrating abuse. Action may also be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or Bristol City Council's resources to further abuse or to locate the victim. Any decisions should be taken in partnership with the victim/survivor. Couple counselling or mediation is never a recommended course of action where domestic violence and abuse is present.

Confidentiality

Employees who disclose perpetrating domestic violence and abuse can expect that where possible any information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission. In circumstances where there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults, confidentiality cannot be assured. However, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously.

Guidance for colleagues:

The stress of living in an abusive relationship is likely to impact on an individual's capacity to perform to the best of their ability at work, and it is unlikely that they would be free from the abusive behaviour while at work. Colleagues are in a good position to be able to identify changes in behaviour, dress, or appearance that may indicate domestic violence and abuse. The Council's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) aims to reassure employees that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

The role of colleagues

Members of staff are encouraged to respond appropriately if they suspect that a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Individuals may not want to discuss the abuse, but concerns should be raised in confidence with a manager. Some victims of domestic violence and abuse will feel unable to accept help, which can be frustrating. Offer support where possible, but do not force an individual to disclose abuse, or to follow a course of action they are uncomfortable with.

If you do feel able to raise the issue with a colleague, [Appendix 3](#) discusses how to ask the question.

[Appendix 1](#) lists sources of support available in Bristol, where possible discuss seeking support with your colleague.

It is not your responsibility to stop the abuse, but you can play an important role by flagging your concerns.

Confidentiality

Any concerns about a member of staff should be raised in confidence and where possible, with the permission of the individual.

Never divulge personal information about colleagues to others, including other members of staff, without their permission. Remember that a perpetrator may contact a victim's workplace in order to gain information about them, or to learn about their whereabouts.

Support

Witnessing a colleague experience domestic violence and abuse can be traumatic and you may feel powerless or unable to help. Remember that you can seek support from your line manager or from the local or national helplines listed in [Appendix 1](#) (you do not have to be a victim yourself to contact them).

You may also feel burdened by additional work that a colleague experiencing abuse is unable to complete. Remember that you can raise this issue with your line manager.

Appendices:

[Appendix 1:](#) Support services

[Appendix 2:](#) Top ten tips for employees and 'Dos + Don'ts'

[Appendix 3:](#) How to ask?

[Appendix 4:](#) Suspected perpetrators of DVA

[Appendix 5:](#) Safety in the workplace

[Appendix 6:](#) How to record?

Appendix 1: Bristol Domestic Violence & Abuse Support Services (correct August 2012)		
Service	Description	Referral criteria & contact details
Bristol Domestic Abuse Forum (BDAF) training	Training for professionals around Domestic Violence & Abuse – Level 2 course free of charge	www.bdaf.org.uk/professionals/training
Next Link Safe houses	Emergency accommodation for women & children fleeing domestic violence & abuse	Women only service www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk 0117 925 0680
Next Link Crisis Response team	Advice and support for women and children threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence and abuse	Women only service www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk 0117 925 0680
Northern Arc & Southern Arc	Community based service for men and women currently living in North Bristol & South Bristol experiencing Domestic Violence & Abuse	Men and women living in North Bristol and South Bristol www.northern-arc.com 0117 982 2495 www.southern-arc.com 0117 353 3853
Victim Support Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA)	Support to men and women experiencing domestic violence & abuse	Men and women, citywide 0117 944 9870
Independent Sexual Abuse Advisor (ISVA)	Service for victims of rape and sexual assault, both recent and historic	Men, women, children and young people www.safelinksupport.co.uk 0117 925 0680
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	Conference to discuss the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in the area. Information shared and used to create a risk management plan involving all agencies	To make a referral, follow these guidelines www.bdaf.org.uk/professionals/making-referral
Stopping Violence Programme	Voluntary group for male perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to change their behaviour	Male perpetrators over 21 years of age www.splitz.org 0117 964 1060
11-24 (WISH)	1:1 support and group programmes for young people experiencing or using violence/abuse	Young people between 11 and 24, both male and female 0117 9038632
Survivor groupwork	The Freedom Programme support group for women - a 12 week rolling support group run in various venues across Bristol	Women only service www.bdaf.org.uk/help-and-support/womens-groupwork-programme 07990 558593
The Bridge	An integrated, comprehensive sexual assault support service	Men, women, children and young people in the Avon and Somerset area

		www.turntothebridge.org 0117 342 6999
Bristol Rape Crisis	Support for women and girls experiencing any form of sexual violence	Women and girls only service www.bristolrapecrisis.org.uk 0117 929 8868
Kinergy	A professional and confidential counselling service for survivors of sexual abuse and/or rape	Men and women, 16 years or older www.kinergy.org.uk 0117 908 7712
Womankind	Provides women in the Bristol area with free or affordable counselling, psychotherapy and on-going support	Women, 18 years or older www.womankindbristol.org.uk 0117 916 6461
Platform 51	Support women and girls into education, training and employment, in the criminal justice system, with ante- or post-natal depression via counselling and group work	Women and girls only service www.platform51.org 0117 963 8775
Brook Bristol	Provides sexual health services, support and advice to young people under the age of 25, including counselling and group work around relationships.	All young people under 25 www.brook.org.uk/brook-bristol 0117 929 0090
Off the Record	Counselling, youth support workers, groups and workshops and sexual health support for young people aged 11-25.	All young people aged 11-24 www.otrbristol.org.uk 0808 808 9120
Helplines		
Service	Description	Contact details
Bristol Domestic Abuse Helpline	A free, confidential helpline for male or female victims in Bristol.	0800 6949 999
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	A confidential service for women experiencing domestic violence and abuse, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.	0808 2000 247 www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk Freephone, 24 Hour.
Men's Advice Line	A confidential helpline for male victims of domestic violence and abuse.	0808 801 0327 www.mensadviceline.org.uk Freephone, Monday - Friday 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm
Respect Phonenumber	A confidential helpline for domestic violence perpetrators (male, female, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships).	0808 802 4040 www.respectphonenumber.org.uk Freephone, Monday - Friday 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm

Broken Rainbow	National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline providing confidential support to all members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities, their family and friends, and agencies supporting them.	0300 999 5428 http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/ Freephone Mondays & Thursdays 10am to 8pm, Tuesdays & Wednesdays 10am to 5pm
Bristol City Council Support Services		
Service	Description	Referral criteria & contact details
Housing	All Bristol City Council Housing services	http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/housing
Occupational Health and Counselling Service	Provide a professional, high quality service to promote and maintain a healthy workforce within a safe and healthy working environment.	referrals.occupationalhealthandcounselling@bristol.gov.uk http://intranet.bcc.lan/ccm/navigation/support-services/occupational-health-and-counselling-services/

Appendix 2:

Top Ten Tips for employees and Dos + Don'ts

1. Be aware that domestic abuse can take many different forms including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and financial abuse
2. Talk about domestic abuse – you can make a difference by simply bringing up the issue and talking about it at work
3. Look for sudden changes in behaviour and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record
4. Look for changes in the way an employee dresses i.e. excessive clothing on hot days, changes in the amount of make-up worn
5. Believe an employee if they disclose experiencing domestic abuse - do not ask for proof. Remember that domestic violence and abuse is as common and as severe among same sex couples as among heterosexual couples.
6. Move the employee out of public view i.e. ensure they are not visible from reception points or ground floor windows
7. Divert phone calls and email messages. Ensure the employee does not work alone or in an isolated area
8. Alert reception and security staff if the abuser is known to come to the workplace
9. Put up domestic abuse helpline posters on the back of toilet doors
10. Have a list of the support services offered in your area that is easily accessible

Adapted from www.equalityhumanrights.com

DO

Create a work environment where employees feel comfortable to disclose abuse

Know how to ask the right questions to let an individual know that they can talk to you about DVA

Listen positively and reassure the individual. Ensure that they know:

- You believe them
- It's not their fault
- There is support available

Pass on information to relevant agencies; this should be alongside the individual whenever possible

Keep detailed, accurate records about an individual's experiences

Make DVA & VAAWG resources available to employees

DON'T

Pressurise an individual into a specific course of action

Promise confidentiality. Do explain the limits of confidentiality and safeguarding duties

Attempt to discuss the issue with the perpetrator if you do not feel comfortable or qualified to do so

Send anything home informing individuals of a disclosure of DVA

Attempt to provide mediation between partners

Recommend couple counselling, mediation or anger management as suitable solutions

Be judgmental of the individual's choices and actions

Stop supporting the individual once you have referred to another agency

Appendix 3: Asking about Domestic Abuse

Victims living with domestic abuse say they are glad when someone ask them about their relationship, so be brave: ask the question, open the dialogue.

Top 10 things to remember:

Victim's safety: always be guided by the need to keep the victim and their children safe. This includes making sure you have privacy for the conversation, and know where you can refer for immediate help. Always put victims and children's safety first

Interpreting: never use children or other family members as interpreters. Try Language Line, or a professional interpreter, but make sure the victim is happy with the interpreter.

Difficult to talk: the victim might not want to talk right now, or even acknowledge what's happening to you. They might be ashamed. Give them space and time to talk – if you haven't got time now, make an appointment for when you do

Don't push: this conversation is the start of a process – victims take time to feel comfortable and open up. Don't push them to reveal what they aren't comfortable to.

Culture/religion: this is never an excuse for domestic abuse. Don't let cultural concerns stand in the way of supporting a victim of abuse.

Children: make sure you know your child protection/safeguarding procedures, and make them clear to the victim – don't promise to keep a secret if you'll have to disclose under child protection.

Rapport: domestic violence and abuse is hard for victims to talk about. Take time to put the victim at ease and build up a rapport – this applies to everyone in your setting; people will be more likely to disclose if they feel they can trust you

On-going support: whether the victim discloses or not, be prepared to ask them again in future if they're all right. Make sure they know they can always talk to you.

Referring on: is it possible to give the victim a contact number, like the national helpline? Check that it would be safe for them to have this. Think about putting domestic violence and abuse posters up in your lobby, and on the backs of toilet doors.

Immediate risk of serious harm: if the victim says they are worried for their own or their children's immediate safety, always refer on urgently to a specialist service. Don't ever try to resolve the abuse yourself – pass this on to an expert, or the police.

What can I say to start the conversation?

I am concerned about how you are; would you like to come and have a chat?

How are things with your partner?

How are things at home?

Does your partner treat you well?

Has your partner ever hit you?

Are you ever afraid at home?

Is someone hurting you?

Have you ever been forced to do anything you didn't want to do?

I see you have a bruise on your face, has someone hit you?

Essential things you can say:

It is not your fault and you don't deserve it- no-one deserves to be hurt, scared or controlled by their partner or anyone else.

You are not alone – it has happened to lots of other people and lots of them go on to make new safer lives for themselves and their children. There are people who can help and want to help.

You, your neighbours, family or friends can always call the police in an emergency. You can call 999 – it's their job to protect us and to prevent crime and that includes domestic violence and abuse.

If you want to leave your partner now, even just for a break to get some rest and some time to think, I can help you make contact with someone who can support you to do that.

Whatever you decide to do, you can always come back to see me again, I will care what happens to you.

Is there is someone else you would prefer to talk to? I don't mind if you don't feel able to talk to me.

Appendix 4:

Dealing with suspected perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse

Managers and colleagues are not expected to attempt to identify perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. However, if you have concerns about an employee's behaviour, the following guidance may be of use.

Although they do not always imply that an individual is a perpetrator, the following signs may be indicative that an employee is perpetrating DVA:

Uncharacteristic lateness or absence with no explanation

Repeated injuries/scratches/bite marks/bruised knuckles/injuries to wrists/forearms

Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner

Jealousy or possessiveness

Negative comments about the employee's partner or women in general

If an individual presents a problem such as drinking, stress or depression, this could also signify that they are perpetrating domestic violence and abuse. The following questions could be asked if you are concerned that this is the case:

"How is this drinking/stress at work/depression affecting how you are with your family?"

"When you feel like this, what do you do?"

"Do you ever feel violent towards a particular person?"

"Do you ever find yourself shouting/smashing things?"

If an individual discloses abusive behaviour, these are useful questions to ask:

"It sounds like your behaviour can be frightening, does your partner ever say that they are frightened of you?"

"How are your children affected?"

"Are you aware of any pattern – is the abuse getting worse or more frequent?"

"What worries you most about your behaviour?"

If you are made aware of concerns that an employee may be perpetrating domestic violence and abuse by another employee, it is important that you do not take any actions that may lead to repercussions for that individual.

If any of these questions identify domestic violence and abuse, remember to **Record** and **Refer**.

Appendix 5: Documenting Domestic Violence/Abuse

This offers general guidance to recording a disclosure of domestic violence and abuse. Your agency may also have a policy on this, or on recording generally, and so this guidance should be read in conjunction with that.

1. You should record all disclosures of domestic violence and abuse, for your own safety and the victim's, and should tell the victim that you will do this, including explaining who will have access to the record. You do not need the victim's consent.
2. Record the date, time and setting in which the abuse happened.
3. Record non-judgementally, using the words that the victim used (e.g. "John hit me with a hammer" not "client has experienced physical violence.") Use words like "stated" and "said," not "alleged" or "claimed."
4. Record your observations: how the victim appears, physical, emotional and behavioural signs that they are experiencing DVA.
5. Make it clear if you are recording interpretation or conclusions that you have drawn, which are not what the victim has stated (e.g. "I think that Jane is being denied access to food because she has lost a lot of weight recently and cannot give a reason for it").
6. If the victim minimises or tries to excuse the abuse, make it clear in any record that this is minimising or excusing, and that this is not a reason for abuse to happen.
7. Always keep notes confidential and under no circumstances allow abusers to see these. This may include having a separate file for the victim e.g. if they live together and have a shared housing record.
8. Never write anything about disclosure on something that the victim will take home. If you work to rules that give clients rights to copies of their own records, make sure disclosure notes are in the "exempt" part of the notes, which will not be copied.
9. If there are previous notes for the victim, review these to see if there have been previous disclosures or evidence of abuse, and if so, what happened as a result.
10. Discuss all disclosures with supervising manager e.g. line manager or child protection supervisor, according to local protocols for information sharing.
11. Sign and date any record.

Adapted from guidance by South Ayrshire Council and Mid-Cheshire NHS Trust

Appendix 6: Safety in the workplace

The following steps should be considered when assessing the safety of an employee:

- Changing keypad numbers on entry systems; changing the employee's start and finish times or shift patterns.
- Offering temporary or permanent changes to the employee's work location, moving them away from reception areas or other areas open to the public; redeployment.
- Ensuring that the employee does not lone work in any situation.
- Looking favourably on requests under the [Work-Life Balance Policy](#) to alter or reduce working hours.
- Changing the employee's work telephone number and removing their name and telephone number from the GroupWise directory so that staff can't inadvertently give out the employees phone number.
- Setting up a firewall to block or divert emails from the perpetrator to a separate folder. Ensure emails are retained, to be used as evidence if needed.
- Identifying an emergency contact person in case the manager is unable to contact the employee.
- If possible provide a parking space close to the building and if necessary provide an escort for entry to and from the building in case the employee is targeted when arriving at or leaving work.
- With the employee's consent provide a copy of any existing protection orders and/or a photograph of the perpetrator and details of the abusers car to security or reception staff.
- Review the employee's next of kin information to ensure the abuser is not listed.
- If an incident at work does occur it should be recorded and followed up under [the Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare Policy](#). Employees may need to seek legal advice in relation to taking out an injunction against the perpetrator in the vicinity of the workplace.