

GUIDANCE NOTE

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Introduction

Domestic abuse is a serious issue within society which affects many people. One in four women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. Men can experience domestic abuse from their female partner and domestic abuse also occurs in same sex relationships.

Domestic abuse is an abuse of power and control over one person by another. It can be a single incident or a series of incidents between adults who are, or who have been intimate partners or family members. It includes physical, psychological, emotional and financial abuse.

This guidance covers the support available to employees experiencing domestic abuse. If you are a manager of someone who is (or who you think might be) experiencing domestic abuse, please refer to the Manager's Guidance on page 2 of this document.

Support Available

There are a number of organisations which provide advice and support for individuals who are experiencing domestic abuse. Some of those are listed below under "Getting further information". You might wish to approach your own GP who will be able to offer advice. You can also speak, in confidence, to your Line Manager, HR or your Trade Union Representative.

If you would find it helpful, HR is able to arrange a referral to the University's confidential, independent counselling service, at no cost to you.

Getting Further Information –

- **Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 027 1234**
Dedicated to supporting all victims of domestic abuse by providing a compassionate, non-judgemental 24 hour telephone service <http://www.sdah.scot/>
- **Scottish Women's Aid: 0800 027 1234**
The leading organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. They play a vital role in campaigning and lobbying for effective responses to domestic abuse. www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk
- **Man Kind Initiative: 01823 334244**
A national charity that provides help and support for male victims of domestic abuse. www.mankind.org.uk
- **Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327**
An advice line offering practical advice, information and support to male victims of domestic abuse as well as concerned friends and families. www.mensadvice.org.uk

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

As a manager you have a responsibility for the welfare and health and safety of employees at work. Whilst it is not your role to deal with the abuse itself, you have crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help.

Recognising the problem

Signs of **possible** domestic abuse include

- employee seeming distracted, depressed or lacking in self confidence
- sudden changes in behaviours and/or changes in the quality of work performance for unexplained reasons despite a previously strong record
- changes in the way an employee dresses, for example wearing excessive clothing on hot days or changes in the amount of make-up worn
- signs of physical injury

Of course, domestic abuse may not be the reason for any of the above, so it is important to act sensitively and if you suspect that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, you should facilitate a conversation in order to discuss this. Ask indirect questions such as “I have noticed recently you are not yourself. Is anything the matter?”

Responding to the problem

If an employee confides in you that they are experiencing domestic abuse:

- Believe the employee: do not ask for proof
- Reassure the employee that the matter will be treated in strict confidence and that only those with a “need to know” will be made aware of the situation
- Draw the employees attention to the guidance “Support for Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse” on Page 1 of this Guidance Document
- Explore what internal support the employee would find helpful e.g. referral to the University’s counselling service
- Recognise the limitations of your role (managers are not professional counsellors or experts)
- Seek further advice from HR