

Domestic Abuse Workplace Procedure

Procedure Identification	
Procedure Ownership	
Department:	Human Resources
Owner:	HR Manager
Author:	Human Resources
Screening and Proofing	
Section 75 screened:	July 2019
Human Rights proofed:	July 2019
DPPIA screened	June 2025
Consultation	
NIPSA NAPO	2024
Approval	
SLT:	December 2024
Version	
Version:	0.2
Date of Issue:	4 March 2025
Implementation date:	4 March 2025
Review date:	March 2029

Document Control

Version No.	Date	Description
0.1	May 2019	1 st draft
0.1	November 2019	Final approved
0.2	September 2024	Review of procedures
0.2	March 2025	Final approved

Alternative Formats

This documentation can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to the Probation Board using the following contact information:

HR Manager
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
2nd Floor
80-90 North Street
Belfast
BT1 1LD
Telephone number: 028 9052 2522
E-mail: human.resources@probation-ni.gov.uk

Contents

Section	Page
1. Background	1
2. Identifying Domestic Abuse within the workplace	1-2
3. Role of Human Resources Department	2-3
4. Role of Line Manager	3-4
5. Help and Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse	4-5
6. What can other Employees do	5
7. Trade Union Representatives	5-6
8. Trusted Colleague	6
9. Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse in the Workplace	7
Appendix 1 Useful Telephone Numbers	
Appendix 2 Trusted Colleague Role Profile	
Appendix 3 Trusted Colleague Contact Details	
Appendix 4 Use and Retention of Information provided to the Trusted Colleague	
Appendix 5 Trusted Colleague Safe Place Conversation Log	

1. Background

Domestic abuse continues to be an ongoing issue throughout Northern Ireland. It is important to recognise that domestic abuse is a societal problem which know no boundaries with regard to age, gender identity, marital status, race, ethnicity or religious groups, sexual orientation, social class, disability or geography.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and be protected from harm. The Probation Board for NI (PBNi) strives to create a working environment that promotes the understanding that everyone has the right to live free from abuse in any form. The responsibility for the abuse lies with the perpetrator and such abuse will not be tolerated.

PBNi is committed to helping those involved in, or experiencing, domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Workplace Procedure seeks to establish clear guidelines to ensure that

- Victims of domestic abuse are aware of the help and support available
- Managers fully understand their role and responsibilities
- With regard to employees found to be a perpetrator (or alleged perpetrator) of domestic abuse, the PBNi reserves the right to invoke appropriate PBNi Policies and Procedures such as Disciplinary.

2. Identifying Domestic Abuse within the Workplace

The PBNi recognises that domestic abuse is not confined to the home and that is it inevitable it will impact upon the employee within the workplace.

Individuals experiencing domestic abuse can suffer a broad range of physical and emotional consequences. Possible signs of domestic abuse include

- high absenteeism rate without explanation
- uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration
- changes in quality of work performance for no apparent reason
- the receipt of repeated upsetting calls/emails
- the individual being the victim of vandalism or threats
- obsession with time
- needing regular time off for appointments
- inappropriate or excessive clothing
- repeated injuries, unexplained bruising or explanations that do not fit the injuries displayed
- increased hours being worked for no apparent reason

It is important to note that the above list is not exhaustive. Individuals experiencing domestic abuse suffer a broad range of physical and emotional consequences and it may be the case that some people do not display any visible signs of abuse.

A lack of recognition of diversity among victims and how a person may have multiple characteristics can make it more challenging to come forward. In addition, stereotypical representations of domestic abuse victims can make it more difficult for individuals to identify themselves as victims and what is happening to them as domestic abuse.

People experiencing domestic abuse are especially vulnerable once they attempt to leave abusive partners and may become vulnerable going to or coming from work or while they are at work as the abuser knows where they are located.

3. Role of Human Resources (HR)

HR has a central responsibility in the development of policy and procedures, to communicate to all employees, and to advise both employees and managers on domestic abuse.

HR is committed to creating a supportive environment and to creating mechanisms for employees, experiencing domestic abuse, to seek help and support. The paramount consideration is to ensure the health and well-being of employees who are the victims of domestic abuse.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse can seek advice and support directly from their HR business partner and they will receive an empathetic, supportive and non-judgemental response.

HR responsibilities include:

- Publishing the policy to staff
- Advising employees and managers on implementation of the policy for dealing with domestic abuse
- Ensuring the employee is aware of the options available to them
- Working with managers to respond to domestic abuse, including granting annual leave/special leave, allowing flexible or more flexible working, making staff aware of financial assistance and, if required opportunities for a change of location.
- Advising managers on the sensitive use of performance and/or managing attendance procedures
- Respecting the confidentiality of the individual concerned although total confidentiality might not be possible in all cases and should not be promised e.g. in the circumstances of child protection or the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse, or where there is serious concern regarding potentially, serious harm to an individual, or where a crime/unlawful activity has been disclosed there may be a legal requirement to share information with appropriate statutory organisations. The PBNi wishes to ensure that all actions arising from disclosure of domestic abuse are employee led and will endeavour to support employees but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in cases

where a crime or risk of significant harm has been disclosed.

- HR can also advise staff of NI's Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act which allows victims of domestic abuse to take up to 10 days of paid leave each year to deal with related issues:
 - obtaining legal advice
 - pursuing legal proceedings
 - finding alternative accommodation
 - taking advantage of healthcare
 - obtaining welfare support
 - protecting family members

4. Role of Line Managers

Individual managers, in consultation with the HR department, can play a key role in supporting staff who are subject to, or have been the victims of domestic abuse. The role of the manager is not to deal with domestic abuse itself. Managers should make a managerial commitment rather than a personal commitment to help a member of staff and outline what help is available to them from both an organisational perspective and in signposting to external support services. This reduces the potential for confusion about the manager's role or blurring of responsibilities.

Any discussion about the employee's situation should take place in private and any questions asked with care and sensitivity. The line manager should

- provide information about the policy.
- create an environment where employees feel safe and able to talk about issues that are affecting them.
- prioritise safety, explore with employees the steps they can take to increase their personal safety.
- be approachable and take the time to talk to the employee ensuring any discussions take place in private.
- listen, reassure and support individuals.
- provide a sensitive, non-judgmental response that includes providing details of the support systems and options that are available respect the confidentiality of the individual concerned although total confidentiality might not be possible in all cases and should not be promised e.g. if there are concerns about the safety of children, or unlawful activity has been disclosed, or it is essential to pass on information to others such as HR.

Signs of abuse should not be ignored but employees should not be pressurized into disclosing any personal information that they do not feel comfortable sharing.

Similarly, managers should respect the choices and decisions the employee may make about the situation. Often it is difficult for someone to leave due to finances, children

and threats of violence. Be aware that a victim may make many attempts before they finally leave an abusive partner.

Where it is alleged that a member of staff is perpetrating abuse during work time or using work resources, the manager should discuss with HR as a matter of urgency. If an employee does not feel comfortable talking to a line manager, they can contact HR or opt to speak to trained individuals within the organisation (a “Trusted Colleague” – see Appendices 2 and 3).

5. Help and Support for Employees who have experienced Abuse

Any employee experiencing or disclosing domestic abuse should be aware that there is help available. The member of staff will be given advice on a range of services that may provide specialist help and support. They will also be given assistance to access these services should they require it.

If required, changes will be considered within the workplace to make it a safer place for the individual. The following is a list of possible adjustments that can be made

- If the employee is absent a method of communication should be arranged with line managers so that they are aware the individual is safe.
- Identifying a work contact for support and an emergency contact should the organisation be unable to contact the employee.
- Where reasonably possible consider a temporary or permanent change in work location.
- Review working times and patterns.
- Review office layout to ensure that the employee is not visible from reception points or ground floor windows.
- Agree with the employee what to tell colleagues and how they should respond should the abuser ring or call at the workplace.
- With consent provide a photograph of the abuser to reception/colleagues.
- Diverting telephone calls.
- Diverting emails to a separate folder.
- Confirm that the employee has arrangements for safely getting to and from work
- Allow special leave or short-term flexible working arrangements to facilitate any practical arrangements that are required e.g. seeking legal advice, to rearrange housing or childcare, or to attend court or to attend specialist support agencies.
- Attendance at Inspire counselling service.
- Providing information on financial support routes.
- Advice on arrangements for flexible working on a longer-term or permanent basis if necessary.
- Opting not to avail of hybrid/home working.
- Advice on provision of longer-term unpaid special leave – if the employee needs to take leave from work due to domestic abuse, the length and type of leave will be determined by the individual’s situation through collaboration with the

employee, their line manager and HR subject to both service needs and the needs of the individual.

People experiencing domestic abuse know their abusers better than anyone else and they should play an active part in deciding what steps will be taken to ensure their personal safety.

6. What Can Other Employees Do?

Colleagues may recognise that a fellow employee is in an abusive situation at home. Employees should be able to speak in confidence either to their line manager, their HR Business Partner or to trained individuals within the organisation (Trusted Colleague – see role profile at Appendices 2 and 3) if they have concerns about the safety of a colleague.

It might be difficult for the person being abused to acknowledge the problem directly to work colleagues but all employees can take basic steps to assist colleagues experiencing domestic abuse. For example:

- talking to the individual and explaining their concern and asking is there anyway they can help.
- offering the opportunity to talk without applying pressure to reveal more than the individual is prepared to give.
- offering support and being a good listener.
- trying to be supportive but not judgemental.
- with the victim's consent helping to report incidents to the line manager.

Employees should recognise that they are not counsellors. It is important that they do not promise more than they are able to provide and are aware of their own well being.

7. Trade Union Representatives

Trade Union representatives can offer support, encouragement and guidance to the employee. It is not their role to act as counsellor but the TU representative can

- Assure the employee that the matter will be dealt with in a sympathetic and confidential manner but it is important to advise that if anything of a criminal nature is disclosed e.g. child or vulnerable adults' protection issues, this will have to be reported.
- Adopt a non-judgemental attitude.
- Encourage the employee to seek professional help and provide details of the support systems that are available.
- Discuss the various options set out under this Domestic Abuse Procedure and agree a way forward.
- Offer to accompany the employee to line management and/or HR.

8.Trusted Colleagues

The PBNI is committed to ensuring a supportive working environment for any employee who discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse. As part of the commitment to the ONUS Workplace Charter on Domestic Abuse, the PBNI has in place the role of 'Trusted Colleague' to offer peer support to staff who are affected by domestic abuse.

The Trusted Colleague network is made from a number of fully trained employees at all levels of the organisation. The network is co-ordinated by a 'Lead Trusted Colleague' who will seek to ensure that the PBNI act as a best practice employer in handling of domestic abuse issues.

The Trusted Colleague can:

- Listen to the concerns of the employee confidentially and without judgement
- Ensure the employee is aware of the PBNI Domestic Abuse Procedure and the support available to them.
- Identify ways that the PBNI can help to ensure the health and safety whilst at work and support the employee to approach their line manager where this is required.
- Signpost the employee to further support available such as Women's Aid.
- Offer to advise the person's line manager of the situation and to report incidents. Please note however if a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse or is at risk of injury or harm, and refuses to access support, the trusted colleague must speak with his/her line manager.

The Trusted Colleague cannot however

- Provide the employee with legal advice or options in terms of the criminal justice system but can signpost to where the information is available.
- Advise the employee what to do next – this is always the employee's own decision.

The Trusted Colleague role profile is set out in Appendix 2. A list of Trusted Colleagues and contact details are set out in Appendix 3.

A Trusted Colleague 'Safe Place Conversation Log' is set out in Appendix 5. This should be used to record contact between an employee and Trusted Colleague.

Where adjustments are to be considered within the workplace to make it a safer place for the individual the line manager/HR should be consulted.

9. Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse in the Workplace

Perpetrators of domestic abuse might use workplace resources such as telephone, or email to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partners, and may involve other colleagues, who may not be aware of their motives, in assisting them.

Domestic abuse perpetrated by probation employees will not be tolerated under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter which is of little or no concern to the organisation.

PBNI recognises that it can have a role in encouraging and supporting employees address offending/problematic behaviour of all kinds and will treat any allegation or conviction on a case by case basis for disciplinary purposes.

When faced with staff members who have been convicted of an offence involving domestic abuse, those against whom an allegation has been made or those who come forward who are presenting concerns about their behaviour within an intimate relationship PBNI will take into account the following:

- Protecting adult and child victims, potential future victims, members of the public and probation staff from the effects of further abuse.
- Ensuring that staff who commit domestic abuse related offences are held accountable.
- Upholding public confidence in the integrity of PBNI as a whole.
- Upholding public confidence and the confidence of victims in reporting domestic abuse and in the PBNI response to domestic abuse.

PBNI reserves the right to consider the use of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or any other Board Policies or Procedures should an employee's activities outside of work have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute.

The PBNI may also take disciplinary action against any employee who uses the time, property or the resources of PBNI to abuse a partner, family member or anyone.

An employee who has a Court Order in relation to domestic abuse in place against them must declare this to PBNI.

Anyone who feels in immediate danger should dial 999

Organisation	What they offer	Contact
Police Service of Northern Ireland	In a non-emergency you can call PSNI and ask to speak to a Domestic violence officer who are available in all areas	101
PSNI – Silent Solutions System	Guidance on what to do if an individual requires urgent police help through the 999 service, but can't speak.	Silent solution guide.pdf (nigov.net)
	<p>The Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS).</p> <p>This scheme gives members of the public a 'right to ask', a formal mechanism to make enquiries about an individual who they have a relationship with, or who is in a relationship with someone they know, where there is a concern that the individual may be violent or abusive towards their partner.</p>	Complete an application on line www.psni.police.uk/domestic-abuse
Domestic and Sexual Abuse	The 24hr domestic and sexual abuse helpline offers support, advice and referral for any victim of domestic and sexual abuse/violence in NI.	Freephone: 0808 802 1414 E-mail: info@dsahelpline.org
Women's Aid	<p>Women's aid is the lead voluntary organisation responding to domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Its main aim is to create a safe and supportive society for women, children and young people affected by domestic violence.</p> <p>Northern Ireland 24 hour Free-Phone Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline</p>	<p>08088021414</p> <p>Text Support to 07797 805839</p>

	<p>Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland</p> <p>Local Women's Aid Advice centres</p> <p>Antrim, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey Ballymena, Larne, Armagh and Down Belfast & Lisburn Causeway Fermanagh Foyle Mid Ulster North Down and Ards Omagh</p>	<p>028 9024 9041</p> <p>028 2563 2136</p> <p>028 3025 0765</p> <p>028 9066 6049</p> <p>028 7035 6573</p> <p>028 6632 8898</p> <p>028 7141 6800</p> <p>028 8676 9300</p> <p>028 9127 3196</p> <p>028 8224 1414</p>
Men's Organisations	<p>Men's Advisory Project</p> <p>Men to Men</p>	<p>028 90 241929</p> <p>028 90 247027</p>
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Helplines	<p>Cara Friend LGBT Switchboard Helpline (Tues/Wed/Thurs evening from 6pm to 9pm))</p> <p>Rainbow Project</p> <p>Belfast Londonderry</p>	<p>0808 8000 390</p> <p>028 9031 9030</p> <p>028 7128 3030</p>
Other useful numbers	The Rowan – Sexual Assault Referral Centre NI	0800 389 4424
	<p>Nexus NI</p> <p>Derry Portadown Enniskillen</p>	<p>028 7126 0566</p> <p>028 3835 0588</p> <p>028 6632 0046</p>
	<p>Victim Support</p> <p>Belfast Ballymena Londonderry Newry Omagh</p>	<p>028 90 243133</p> <p>028 2563 0784</p> <p>028 7137 0086</p> <p>028 3025 1321</p> <p>028 8224 0012</p>
	<p>Disability Action</p> <p>Belfast</p>	<p>028 90 297880</p>

	Dungannon North West Carrickfergus	028 8775 2372 028 7136 0811 028 9336 9367
	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities	028 90238645
	Citizens Advice Bureau	0300 1233 233
	Law Society (Legal and Local Solicitor Advice)	028 9023 1614
	Relate NI	028 9032 3454
	Samaritans	08457 90 90 90
	Parents Advice Centre	0808 8010 722
	Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission	028 90 408888
	Age NI(Free phone)	0808 808 7575
	Children in Northern Ireland	028 9040 1290
	Lifeline	0808 808 8000
	NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
	Inspire Counselling Service 24 hour helpline	0808 800 0002
	NIPSA Welfare Fund provides support to members at times of unforeseen financial hardship. Help is available to members who meet the criteria and urgent attention is always given to those cases where domestic and sexual violence and abuse is highlighted.	9066 1831
	ForYouByYou.org.uk is the NI Civil Service charity which can provide confidential support and advice including financial assistance.	0800 056 2424



TRUSTED COLLEAGUE DOMESTIC ABUSE PROCEDURE

Training will be provided to staff who wish to fulfil this role with PBNI.

The role of Trusted Colleague is as follows:

- Provide information about the policy and procedure.
- Be aware of the signs which indicate abuse could be taking place.
(See paragraph 2 of procedure – Identifying domestic abuse)
- Help create an environment where victims feel comfortable talking about issues that are affecting them. Let the person know that he/she can talk to you about abuse, take time to talk, to listen, and know how to ask the right questions.
- Provide a sensitive, non-judgemental response that includes providing details of the support systems available. (Details as set out in appendix 1 of the Procedure)
- Make the person aware of his/her options at work and outside of work and understand the role of the workplace in managing risk. (See appendix 5 Trusted Colleague Safe Place Conversation Log See also possible adjustments that can be made as outlined in paragraph 5 of the Procedure).
- Offer to advise the person's line manager of the situation and to report incidents. Please note however if a colleague is experiencing domestic abuse or is at risk of injury or harm, and refuses to access support, you **must** speak with his/her line manager.
- See also Appendix 4 in regard to confidentiality.
- As a trusted colleague you should recognise that you are not a trained counsellor. It is important that you do not promise more than what can be provided and you must be aware of your own well-being.
- To raise awareness of domestic abuse and supporting H&S Dept in promoting their annual Health & Wellbeing Programme of events, such as No More Week.
- Attend meetings and training sessions arranged by H&S Dept.
- Confidentially logging support conversations.

Domestic Abuse (Staff) Workplace Procedure

Appendix 3

Trusted Colleague Contact Details

Name	Role	Mobile Number
Alana McDermott	Probation Officer	07775438255
Apolonia Mbondiya	Probation Officer	07500052900
Catherine Corrigan	Business Support Manager	07884264570
Claire Houston	Area Manager	07787697626
Colum Duffy	Area Manager	07771617505
Fiona Quail	Information and Governance Officer	07919574606
Jeneen Shirlow	Probation Officer	07385409156
Josie Healy	Business Support Manager	07917722660
Pauline McMillan	Probation Officer	07769681338
Siobhan McElnea	Probation Officer	07920186794
Tanya Gillanders	Probation Officer	07974479084

Lead Trusted Colleague Details

Name	Office Number		Mobile Number
Kate Tyrell	90257338		07824821925

Deputy Lead Trusted Colleague Details

Name	Office Number		Mobile Number
Patricia Barry	02890306630		07920186408

Use and Retention of Information provided to the Trusted Colleague

The information employees provide to the Trusted Colleague will remain confidential between them both unless it is agreed otherwise or where adjustments are to be considered within the workplace to make it a safer place for the individual, the line manager/HR should be consulted.

In some circumstances total confidentiality might not be possible and should not be promised e.g. in the circumstances of child protection or the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse, or where there is serious concern regarding potentially, serious harm to an individual, or where a crime/unlawful activity has been disclosed there may be a legal requirement to share information with appropriate statutory organisations.

The PBNi wishes to ensure that all actions arising from disclosure of domestic abuse are employee led and will endeavour to support employees but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in cases where a crime or risk of significant harm has been disclosed. the Trusted Colleague may be obligated to pass on the information which has been disclosed. Such circumstances will include:

- Where there is concern that the staff member may self-harm.
- Where there is potential risk to vulnerable adults or children.
- Where unlawful activity has been disclosed.
- Where it is essential to pass on information to others such as HR.

Any records kept will be forwarded to the Lead Trusted Colleague marked 'Official Sensitive' via e-mail.

The Lead Trusted Colleague will review and discuss further with the Trusted Colleague involved (debrief) if necessary, so that the Trusted Colleague can be assured they have acted appropriately.

The records will be retained securely on Content Manager by the Lead Trusted Colleague in line with the data protection legislation. Contact with a Trusted Colleague is an informal process and the retention of records by the Lead Trusted Colleague is to ensure details are kept as confidential as possible with minimum involvement of others unless necessary.

The retention of records by the Lead Trusted Colleague is also to enable prompt access to the information by the Lead Trusted Colleague in the event that the original Trusted Colleague is not available (and further action is necessary to assist the employee) or to enable debriefing should a 'handover' be required to another Trusted Colleague.

The Lead Trusted Colleague will however send anonymous information (no employee details) to Human Resources to enable PBNi to review practice if necessary and ascertain

how extensive domestic abuse is within the organisation. This information will be kept in table format and include such detail as:

- How many contacts have been made to Trusted Colleagues and/or line managers.
- Support provided locally to employees.
- Support provided with HR involvement (including use of other PBNi policies).



Trusted Colleague Safe Place Conversation Log

This form should be used to record contact between PBNI employees and Trust Colleagues. It will be scanned and e-mailed marked 'Official Sensitive' to the Lead Trusted Colleague, this conversation log document will then be confidentially destroyed.

Associated procedure(s) have been provided and read to the employee.

Employee Seeking Support Details:	
Initials:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
Trusted Colleague:	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Work Location:	
Initial Contact:	
How was initial contact established?	In person <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Call <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Date & Time:	
Conversation:	
Date:	Location:
Time:	

What signposting and/or support was offered by the Trusted Colleague?

Checklist: - Check the following with the Lead Trusted Colleague	
Please confirm the following by ticking the box provided: -	
Has the employee been given the PBNi Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy and Procedure and has this been fully explained, including the type of support PBNi may be able to offer?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the employee been given the guidance document about the role of the Trusted Colleague and has this been explained?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the employee been signposted to the 24-hour domestic abuse helpline and are they aware of the information and support provided by other relevant organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the employee been advised of how their information will be retained and have they agreed to this?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have restrictions on confidentiality i.e., where there is a disclosure in relation to self-harm or risk to vulnerable adults or children been discussed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is any additional action required regarding risk or safeguarding?	<input type="checkbox"/>