

Domestic Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy

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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:

Equality Manager
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
2nd Floor
80-90 North Street
Belfast
BT1 1LD
Telephone number: 028 9052 2522
E-mail: info@pbni.gov.uk

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Appendix 1 Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence and Abuse

Appendix 2 Safe Place Initiative

1. Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse has a devastating impact on victims and their families. It accounts for approximately one-fifth of all recorded violent crime in Northern Ireland and it is estimated that one in four women and one in nine men will experience domestic violence in the course of their lifetime.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland has been awarded the Onus Workplace Charter Platinum Award on domestic violence and seeks to implement best practice policies and procedures to support employees affected by domestic violence. See Appendix 1.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland has also signed up to the Safe Place initiative which offers a wide range of services to all victims of domestic violence. See Appendix 2.

It is vitally important that people are aware that they no longer have to endure domestic violence and abuse, and that there is support for them. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is also committed to the principle that domestic violence and abuse is unacceptable behaviour and everyone has the right to live free from fear and abuse.

2. Policy Statement

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) recognises that its employees will be amongst those impacted by domestic violence and abuse. PBNI therefore recognises its responsibility for the well-being of staff and will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

PBNI is committed to ensuring that it will

- Assist and support employees who approach the organisation for help in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse
- Ensure those employees seeking assistance are confident their situation will be handled with understanding and sensitivity and with the seriousness it warrants
- Ensure, as far as it is possible, that all cases brought to the attention of the organisation will be treated confidentially by those involved
- Offer ongoing support if necessary
- Signpost employees to external support agencies who can carry on the support beyond the workplace.
- Raise awareness of domestic abuse and ensure a consistent approach across the PBNI
- Deal effectively and appropriately with employees found to be perpetrators (and alleged perpetrators) of domestic violence and abuse. Meet all obligations placed on it as an employer under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees.

3. Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to create a safe and supportive working environment and to ensure that victims of domestic abuse who raise the issue will be treated promptly, sensitively and with regard to personal safety and confidentiality.

4. Policy Scope

This policy is directed to all employees to highlight the levels of support available, to increase awareness of the scale of the issue and the short and long term impact of domestic violence and abuse, and to provide a supportive structure in which to deal effectively with cases.

With regard to employees found to be a perpetrator (or an alleged perpetrator) of domestic violence and abuse, the PBNI reserves the right to invoke appropriate PBNI Policies and Procedures such as Disciplinary.

5. Policy Outcome

Issues relating to domestic violence and abuse will be dealt with in a sensitive and supportive manner with due regard for confidentiality.

6. Definition

There are a number of different definitions of domestic violence and abuse. The NI Government's Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy defines domestic violence and abuse as "threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on **anyone** (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member".

Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of coercive control and the misuse of power by one person over another within an intimate relationship or family. It is usually frequent and persistent. It is the use of physical or emotional force or threat within close, adult relationships in a way that causes harm, or is to 'punish', frighten or cause distress to victims, children or other vulnerable adults.

Women still make up the largest proportion of domestic violence and abuse victims but men can also be victims.

Whilst domestic violence and abuse happens most often in intimate partner relationships, domestic violence which often includes sexual violence, can also happen between parents and children, brothers and sisters, family members and grandparents, and same sex or teenage relationships. It can also include violence inflicted on, or witnessed by children and young people and this can have a long-term life changing impact.

Domestic violence and abuse can be physical and can include: slapping, punching, beating, kicking, knife wounds, often leading to permanent injuries and sometimes death.

It can be financial abuse, controlling a person's money and resources with the intention of increasing their dependency on the other person.

It can be sexual abuse, this could include being forced to have sex and sexual degradation.

Domestic violence and abuse can go beyond physical violence. It can involve emotional abuse, for example: undermining of self-confidence; the destruction of property; threats to others including children; controlling behaviour such as isolation from friends and family; control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone; and stalking.

Coercive control is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation and is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulation of everyday behaviour. Some common examples of coercive behaviour are:

- Isolating the victim from family and friends
- Depriving of basic needs such as food
- Monitoring the victim's time
- Monitoring online communication tools
- Taking control over aspects of everyday life such as who the victim can see, what they can wear, when they can sleep
- Depriving of access to support services such as medical services
- Repeatedly putting the person down, such as saying you're worthless
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising the victim
- Controlling finances
- Making threats or intimidating behaviour

There is no legal definition of stalking. However, it is generally accepted that it includes repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and/or contacts on another in a manner that could be expected to cause distress and/or fear in any reasonable person.

Taken in isolation, some of the behaviours may seem like small acts, but together they make up a consistent pattern of behaviour that is frightening and upsetting.

Unwanted communications include:

- Telephone calls
- Letters
- Emails
- Text messages
- Sending or leaving unsolicited materials/gifts

- Graffiti
- Messages on social networking sites

7. Impact of Domestic Violence and Abuse on the Workplace

Home and work issues cannot always be separated and domestic violence can impact greatly on the working life of someone who is being abused. Domestic violence can result in deterioration in an employee's performance, increased absenteeism or poor time keeping, threatening job prospects and job security.

A person can also continue to experience the violence and abuse in the workplace through, for example, abusive or threatening phone calls and other colleagues can also be affected as they too could experience the threatening or intimidating behaviour from the perpetrator.

People experiencing domestic violence 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 can be located. This can give rise to health and safety issues and an increased risk of workplace violence.

8. Procedure

This policy is supported by the Domestic Violence and Abuse Procedure. The procedure should be read in conjunction with this document and referred to when dealing with domestic violence and abuse.

9. Linkages

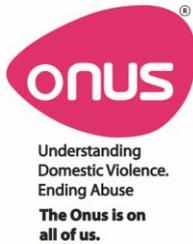
This policy links with the following:

- Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Special Leave Guidance
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy (Organisational)
- Child Protection Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy

10 Review

This Policy will be reviewed four years from date of approval by the Board.

Interim reviews may also be prompted by feedback, and/or identified changes in practice.



The Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence

1. We will support the Safe Place Campaign Pledge: never to commit, condone or stay silent about Domestic Violence.
2. We will acknowledge domestic violence is a problem that impacts on all of us as a society, and will be prepared to play our part in supporting victims and sending a clear message to perpetrators that domestic violence is intolerable.
3. We will provide a Safe Place for victims of domestic violence to confidentially access information.
4. We will ensure that we can effectively respond to disclosures of abuse and how to seek support.
5. We will ensure that a victim of domestic violence will not be disadvantaged within the terms and conditions of their employment and will take all reasonable measures to facilitate any needs in the workplace.
6. We will commit to working/participating with other organisations to facilitate best support for victims.
7. Our policy (or policy statement) will be clearly communicated to all employees and will be easily and discretely accessed within the workplace.
8. We will ensure that a designated person, or people, within our organisation has received appropriate training and information on issues related to domestic violence and the workplace.
9. We will regularly update and evaluate our organisational policy/policy statement on domestic violence in consultation Onus.
10. We will ensure that we have sufficient employees trained across our organisation, to ensure there is adequate access to support within the workplace for all employees. Staff trained should be representative of our workplace and will include peer support staff ('Trusted Colleagues').
11. We will put in place effective procedures to record any discussions/meetings arising from disclosure of domestic violence.
12. During annual evaluation, we will share anonymised case studies with Onus, to facilitate identification and sharing of best practice responses to domestic violence within the workplace.
13. We will work in partnership with Onus and other organisations to become Safe Place Advocates

14. We will seek out new opportunities to extend the Safe Place message, never to commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence

15. We will develop in partnership with Onus new means of creating safer workplaces and communities with zero tolerance to domestic abuse



Safe Place Initiative

Safe Place is an initiative offering information on the wide range of services available to all victims of domestic violence.

Anyone signing up to Safe Place must support the 3 Safe Place commitments:

1. Support the Safe Place Campaign Pledge: never to commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence.
2. Acknowledge domestic violence is a problem that impacts on all of us as a society, and will be prepared to play your part in supporting victims and sending a clear message to perpetrators that domestic violence is intolerable.
3. Provide a Safe Place for victims of domestic violence to confidentiality access information.

We believe that all of society can play an important role in supporting victims of domestic violence and sending a clear message to perpetrators that this is NOT something that only takes place behind closed doors.

Domestic violence is always wrong, potentially criminal and costs all of us.

What do Safe Place organisations have to do?

The Safe Place logo indicates that information on services for victims or domestic violence is available on the premises.

What Safe Place organisations do NOT have to do:

Signing up to the Safe Place scheme does not mean that organisations have to do anything beyond signposting people to the appropriate services.

ONUS provide information and support to all who sign up to the scheme.

What the ONUS Platinum Workplace Charter logo means:

Organisations who have signed up to progress to the Onus Platinum Workplace Charter have made a further 9 commitments, in addition to the 3 Safe Place commitments, to extend support to employees who are experiencing domestic violence.

As employers they are demonstrating their willingness to acknowledge the reality that domestic abuse can affect an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men, to demonstrate their commitment to employee wellbeing and to let staff know that when they are not safe at home, they can access support from the safety of the workplace.