



Domestic Violence and the Workplace

Deborah McIlveen
Policy & Services Manager
Women's Aid England



Women's Aid

- Membership organisation – national network of 500+ local domestic violence services across England
- Services – national helpline, UK Gold Book, training, research, publicity and guidance, UK Refuges on-line, on-line Survivor Handbook
- Partnerships – work with government, justice system, health, voluntary sector for a co-ordinated approach to end domestic violence

Work is based on over 30 years of campaigning research and advocacy to improve responses and to prevent domestic violence

Aims:

- Understanding domestic violence
- A workplace issue – exploring responses
- The way forward

What is domestic violence?

- Domestic violence is the misuse of power and control by one person over another within the context of an intimate or family relationship.
- Cause of DV lies in the relations of power existing within traditional family models and in traditional gender roles and expectations of men and women in society.
- DV is chosen intentional behaviour based on mistaken belief of having a right to exert power over another, to control a woman's/partner's behaviour



Domestic Violence

- 1 in 4 women (Council of Europe 2002)
- 12.9 million incidents (British Crime Survey 2004)
- 2 women killed every week
- Impact on children and young people

Why is it a business issue?

- Employee absenteeism & turnover
- Lost productivity
- Stress
- Workplace violence that threatens the safety of all employees
- Impact on other staff
- Financial costs



U.S Research

- 56% of abused women are late for work at least five times a month, 28% leave early at least five days a month, and 54% to miss at least three full days of work a month.
- 47% of senior executives surveyed said that domestic violence has a harmful effect on the company's productivity, and 44% of executives said that that domestic violence increases their company's health care costs.
- • 75% of domestic violence victims are targeted at work, from harassing phone calls, abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced, to physical assaults.



Role that business/employer can play:

- Creating workplace domestic violence policies
- Training and educating employees on domestic violence issues.
- Providing access to workplace counselling, healthcare and other benefits.
- Reviewing existing policies to identify ways to promote and improve safety in the workplace.



Role that business/employer can play:

- Taking action against perpetrators convicted of domestic violence.
- Making resources, posters and information available in the workplace.
- Exerting leadership in local communities by promoting domestic violence issues, fundraising for and supporting specialist domestic violence services nationally and local refuges and support services.

How will this benefit the organisation?

- **More effective staff**

Staff will feel fully supported and confident in approaching their employer for help. This can only improve the work environment for all employees through minimizing stress and absenteeism & increase employees commitment to their organisation.

- **Recruitment and retention**

A workplace policy is a good investment, helping to retain skilled and experienced staff, and contributing to motivation and job satisfaction.



Benefits:

- **Getting the best people for the job**

An employer with family friendly policies will be attractive to a much wider pool of potential applicants.

- **Improved equal opportunities, and an improved public image**

Employers are demonstrating a powerful commitment to the principles of equal opportunities and community investment, and to achieving equal opportunities in the workplace particularly for women.



Benefits:

- **Prevention of disciplinary action**

Domestic violence can result in poor attendance, lateness, poor performance, health and safety risks and reduced productivity. Addressing the domestic violence can prevent disciplinary action while at the same time benefiting the work place environment and home/community environment of those who work and live with anyone experiencing the violence.

- **Financial savings**

Prevention of poor productivity and improvement in performance saves money.

How Business can help?

- Case example
- Develop and implement a policy/procedures
- Awareness raising and help
- Be alert to the possibility
- An integrated approach
- Training
- Publicity and Promotion



Background in England

- Voluntary Sector and Trade Unions
- Government: national & local
- Police, Health, Crown Prosecution Services etc
- Corporates



Women's Aid:

0808 2000 247

Freephone 24-hour National DV Helpline

Run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge

Language Line and Type Talk availability

- **Provides support, information, listening** services to women experiencing DV and to those seeking help on a women's behalf.
- **Explores available options** and if appropriate **refers on** to local refuges, DV services and other sources of help and information.
- **UK-refuges online:** up-to-date bed space availability across UK
- On- line Survivors Handbook

www.thehideout.org.uk

www.womensaid.org.uk