

Domestic Violence/Abuse Guidance Document for Managers (and Colleagues) supporting Employees

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Types and Impact of Domestic Violence	2
3. Barriers to Seeking Support.....	3
Internal Barriers	3
External Barriers	3
4. Guidance around having conversations with Employees.....	4
What to do if you suspect a colleague or team member is being subjected to domestic violence and abuse?	4
Recognise.....	4
Respond.....	4
Refer	4
Do	4
Don't.....	5
5. Practical Steps to Support Employees.....	5
6. Further Considerations	6
7. Resources/Supports for Employees	6
UCD Supports	6
External Supports	7
Types of abuse / behaviours	7

1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to provide line managers and colleagues with a greater understanding of the impact of domestic violence/abuse on an individual and the support they can offer an employee within the workplace if they are disclosed to. This document should be read in conjunction with the Policy on Supporting Employees and Students affected by Domestic Violence/Abuse.

The impact of domestic violence/abuse can be devastating and can be wide reaching, including both the person experiencing the abuse and those close to them such as children, non-abusive family members and friends. The harm caused by domestic abuse has many layers. It can be physical, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social; the effects usually overlap and interconnect. It should be recognised that domestic violence/abuse, whether being currently experienced or historic, will continue to affect employees due to the lasting effects of having experienced such trauma. There is no 'type of person' who is subjected to domestic violence and abuse. A person of any age, nationality,

ability, religion, socioeconomic status, and other factors can be subjected to violence and abuse by an ex-/partner or family member.

Domestic Violence is prevalent in Ireland and across the world and unsurprisingly, will affect employees ability to function in the university, having a detrimental impact on their work.

Important Statistics in Ireland bearing in mind that domestic Violence/Abuse is under-reported:

- One in four women in Ireland who have been in a relationship have been abused by a current or former partner.
- A 2014 EU-wide study by the [European Union Fundamental Rights Agency](#) revealed that:
 - 6% of Irish women have experienced sexual violence and 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a current or former partner since age 15
 - 12% of Irish respondents in the study had experienced stalking (including cyber-stalking)
 - 41% of Irish women know someone in their circle of family or friends who have experienced intimate partner violence
- About 25% of LGBTI+ people suffer through violent or threatening relationships with partners or ex-partners (Women’s Aid)
- At least 1 in 7 men in Ireland will experience domestic violence during their lifetime, including coercive control (Men’s Aid, November 2024)
- Almost all (94%) employees who are subjected to abuse report an impact on their work performance. ([Vodafone Foundation, 2021](#))
- Many women are prevented from working, forced to work part-time or take sick leave, or become ill, stressed, or lose confidence as a result of the abuse they are subjected to. Some will ultimately cease working. ([Safe Ireland and NUIG, 2021](#))

2. Types and Impact of Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence/Abuse can impact work in the following key ways:

Safety and security	Productivity, participation and attendance	Career progression and employment stability
Perpetrators of domestic abuse will often continue the abuse while the victim-survivor is at work or travelling to/from work. Co-workers may be directly affected by the abuser’s harassment, stalking, and assault.	The impacts of domestic violence may have a negative impact on victim-survivors’ productivity. Where an employee is being abused, it is common to see an increase in absenteeism and presenteeism (where individuals are at work but affected by sickness, distraction or distress).	The impacts of being subjected to violence and abuse often affect an employee’s ability to reach their full potential in work. This can create difficulty in retaining employment and have knock-on effects on victim-survivors’ career progression.

The most common types of domestic abuse are physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse (see appendix 1 for examples of behaviour). Abuse is seldom overt - the close victim-abuser relationship can obscure the abuse taking place, making it difficult for a victim themselves or people outside of that relationship to identify. Violence and abuse often increases in frequency and severity over time.

3. Barriers to Seeking Support

Accessing any available support on domestic violence/abuse from the employer requires an employee to take the step of disclosing their experience to someone at work. This is not an easy task and there are many barriers that may prevent individuals from speaking out about the abuse they are suffering. It is important to understand the power of these barriers, as they explain why many individuals struggle to escape an abusive relationship, even when they (or other family members) have endured abuse over a long period of time and may have suffered ongoing or serious injury. Here are some examples of internal and external barriers:

Internal Barriers

Internal barriers relate to common fears, beliefs, and attitudes that victims-survivors themselves may have.

- Fear of not being believe or being blamed
- Embarrassment, shame
- Self-blame and guilt
- Fear of 'dishonouring' family
- Protect partner/relationship/ financial security
- Fear abuse may escalate
- Fear of losing children, home
- Being unaware of options or available resources
- Fear of losing job/failing course or impact on career/studies
- Concerns about confidentiality or privacy if disclosing at place of work/study

External Barriers

External barriers relate to other people's beliefs about domestic abuse, lack of specialist support (policies and procedures), and societal and cultural norms.

- Abuser's physical presence or controlling behaviour
- Abuser's manipulation of professionals
- Lack of money/financial support
- Social isolation
- Cultural and societal norms (e.g. stigma of separation/ relationship-breakdown/ single parenthood; religious prohibitions on divorce)
- Putting friends/family at risk or upsetting them
- Public perceptions and victim blaming attitudes
- Unable to access domestic abuse policies or guidelines at place of work/study

Victims-Survivors may also have concerns that someone's response could put them in danger or have negative repercussions for any feelings of safety and respite their workplace offers them.

Disclosing domestic violence, planning to leave or leaving an abusive partner, is therefore a dangerous time for the person who is being abused. A response to an employee who is disclosing their experience needs to consider and always prioritise the employee's safety. Considering confidentiality and being employee-led are fundamental principles to responding safely and effectively. It is important that

people who are disclosed to are empowered to react supportively.

4. Guidance around having conversations with Employees

What to do if you suspect a colleague or team member is being subjected to domestic violence and abuse?

Line managers and/or colleagues may be the first ones to suspect or hear about a colleague's experiences of domestic violence and abuse. In situations where this is suspected, it is important to address the concern with tremendous sensitivity and caution. Knowing what your limits are and how you can respond is important.

Recognise

- It's important to be open-minded and not make assumptions.
- Check in with the individual and, if comfortable to do so, sensitively share your observations and personal concerns. Focus on clear examples and work-related impact.
- Respect your colleague's boundaries. If an individual is unwilling to discuss, don't force a conversation.
- You are not an expert so it's important not to offer professional advice or promise a specific outcome.
- Seek advice confidentially from HR about how to proceed without disclosing names.

Respond

- Review the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy and support materials.
- Let your colleague know that you are there to listen and guide them towards supports and resources that are available – as set out in this policy.
- Allow them to be in control - ask how you can help and allow them to make their own decisions. They are experts on their own safety.
- Avoid expressing judgment or shock; don't criticize their decisions; don't try to "fix" the situation. Listen and respond in a non-judgmental way.
- Help them source relevant information but avoid insisting on them doing anything or speaking to anyone they don't want to.
- If you are their line manager, you can agree and implement supportive arrangements (see Supports section below)

Refer

- In some situations if you believe the individual is in imminent danger and/or you have concern for workplace safety, involve HR, Campus Security and/or the Gardaí. Otherwise, your concerns should remain confidential.
- You can signpost the 'Sources of Support', outlined below. Line managers and/or colleagues can also avail of these.

Do

- Supportive Statements:
 - *This is not your fault.*
 - *You have a right to feel safe.*
 - *Ask how the university can help*
- Speak to them in a private space, where they feel safe.
- Listen, believe and acknowledge

- Be non-judgmental
- Maintain confidentiality (under the limits of confidentiality)
- Reassure them they're not alone and signpost to appropriate specialist support services (see below)
- Respect their background, culture and beliefs.
- Keep questions open-ended.

Don't

- Ask questions like 'Why don't you just leave?'
- Make assumptions based on the person's beliefs, values, age, sexuality or gender identity
- Force the issue – it might take several tries before they are ready to talk
- Speak to the family or friends of the victim

5. Practical Steps to Support Employees

There is no single approach to supporting individuals as their experience and needs will differ. Workplace studies show that the stigma of domestic abuse makes it difficult for employees to disclose abuse, it is important therefore that if any employee seeks help or support for domestic abuse, that they are treated with respect and listened to. The impact of the abuse may be immediate, as a direct result of physical injury, or indirectly and over a long period of time as a result of coercion, control, and stress.

The following are examples of supports for employees that could be put in place - in addition to the manager, putting these supports in place may require the involvement of other areas such as HR and other services. This will not be done without the consent of the employee concerned. Employees seeking supports should discuss these options with their line manager in the first instance and support will be provided by the relevant areas to put the agreed supports in place (confidentially and with consent from the employee).

- ❖ Offering temporary/permanent changes in the workplace, work times or patterns
- ❖ Signposting to the Employee Assistance Service and external specialist support services
- ❖ An appointment can be arranged with the University's Occupational Health Provider to provide support and accommodations and/or necessary medical advice to the employee.
- ❖ Ensuring the effects of abuse are taken into consideration when reviewing an employee's performance goals and/or workload.
- ❖ Arranging short-term emergency accommodation . This may be arranged in very exceptional circumstances for 1/2 nights. If this situation arises, the line manager should contact edi@ucd.ie.
- ❖ Consideration of relevant supports regarding salary (e.g. changing bank account details) Provision of Statutory paid Domestic Violence Leave for employees (5 paid leave days in any 12 month period) to support a range of needs (see Guidance on taking Domestic Violence Leave document)

Note: It is important for line managers to be clear as to one's boundaries in relation to the level of support that can be provided to an employee. The above are the key areas in which managers can support employees. Employees should be signposted to counselling services and other expert support and guidance services. Line managers are also encouraged to contact the Employee Assistance Service should support be required around this if managing an employee impacted by domestic violence/abuse.

Human Resources and EDI are not positioned as experts on domestic violence but will provide information to support line managers, employees, student support and other trusted roles and students line with UCD policy.

6. Further Considerations

Concern for a person's immediate safety: As indicated above, confidentiality and being employee-led are fundamental principles to responding to a situation where someone has disclosed that they are impacted by domestic violence/abuse. However if there are concerns for a person's immediate safety or the safety of others, they should contact the Duty Manager in Estate Services on 7999 who can support the individual impacted with contacting the Gardaí. People can also be offered details of helplines if they wish to take them.

Working from home can increase the intensity of the violence and abuse which a victim-survivor is subjected to as perpetrators may have more opportunities to abuse. While some employees who are being subjected to domestic abuse may welcome having access to the work site or an alternative safe space to work, employers should not make assumptions about an employee's needs. Following a disclosure and where an employee is a remote or hybrid worker, it is recommended that they are consulted on their safety and wellbeing needs regarding their work setting. Any meetings should always be held in person.

Marginalised Groups: Although domestic abuse affects individuals from all ethnic groups and multiple communities, the form the abuse takes may vary and there may be additional barriers to inclusion, support and services. For example, people's experiences may be compounded by racism and may affect their ability to seek help. Consequently, support needs to take account of the diverse nature of experiences and recognise how intersectionality can impact individuals' ability to seek support - victim/survivors are not homogenous.

Both the victim-survivor and the perpetrator of domestic abuse are located in UCD: This behaviour may fall within scope of the Bullying and Harassment policy and Sexual Misconduct policy. In these instances, the University will take appropriate action to ensure safety. For example, action may need to be taken to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the university. This may include a change of duties or location of offices or other appropriate action. In these instances, further information can be provided by HR or the Dignity and Respect Support Service.

7. Resources/Supports for Employees

UCD Supports

- Employee Assistance Service

- UCD HR Partners
- Head of School/Unit
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Dignity and Respect Support Service (in situations where both victim-survivor and alleged perpetrator are employees/students of UCD)
- Estate Services Duty Manager

External Supports

- Women’s Aid <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-help/> <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-help/helpingsomeone-else/>
- Men’s Aid Ireland: Call 01 554 3811, email hello@mensaid.ie or see www.mensaid.ie • Male advice line: 1800 816 588
- Safe Ireland <https://www.safeireland.ie/get-help/>
- Women’s Aid <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-informed/facts/>
- <https://www.womensaid.ie/what-is-abuse/types-ofabuse/>
- <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-help/your-rightsoptions/coercive-control-law/>
- <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-help/talk-to-us/otherlanguages/>
- <https://www.toointoyou.ie/what-is-abuse/> <https://www.toointoyou.ie/stories-from-survivors/>
- Surviving Economic Abuse <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/>
- An Garda Síochána <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime/domestic-abuse/what-is-coercive-control-.html>
- Men’s Development Network <https://mensnetwork.ie/mal> OSHA EU <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/building-safespaces-domestic-violence-and-workplace>
- Financial Aid: See: <https://mabs.ie/>
- Legal Aid: See: www.legalaidboard.ie
- Parentline: <https://www.parentline.ie/> , helpLine 1890 927 277
- Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 (section 7)
- Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (action 2.4.10 on p.27 of the Implementation Plan)
- Government campaign: Zero Tolerance for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- Dublin Race Crisis Centre

Types of abuse / behaviours

The list below can be signs of an abusive relationship that a person may be experiencing. Not all methods of abuse are listed here and some are hard to define.

Type of Abuse	Examples of Behaviours
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<p>Physical Assault:</p> <p>Causing or potentially causing any harm to the body of the other person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Punching or slapping them ● Using weapons, such as knives or hammers against ● Using household items as weapons, such as throwing a phone at the person ● Biting/Pinching/Kicking the person ● Pulling their hair ● Pushing or shoving them ● Burning them ● Strangling or choking them ● Raping them
<p>Emotional or Psychological Abuse Causing or attempting to cause psychological harm to the other person by the use of: verbal aggression and threats; humiliation; undermining of self-esteem; name calling; continual “put downs”; psychological degradation; exploitation; threatening to hurt children; intimidation; bullying;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constantly putting you down and calling you names in private and/or in front of others ● Not listening or responding when you talk ● Restricting where the person can travel to or who you can see. ● Monitoring the petrol or diesel you have used in your car or the distance you have travelled ● Not allowing friends or family to the house or stopping you from spending time with them ● Telling your family and friends lies about you ● Sulking or not speaking to you when you do something they don’t approve of ● Lying to you or withholding information from you ● Being jealous of your other relationships with family, friends or colleagues ● Having other relationships ● Breaking promises and shared agreements ● Threatening to harm themselves
<p>Financial Abuse: Controlling or attempting to control the other person by means of economic blackmail; having dominant or complete control of all monies and bank accounts; denial of access to necessary funds; preventing the victim from working or having financial independence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Controlling all household money and asking you to account for money spent, including showing receipts ● Denying you access to your bank account or shared bank accounts ● Sabotaging your work or preventing you from attending work (example: hiding your car keys) ● Withholding money for food, household or personal items ● Not paying bills, rent or the mortgage and allowing arrears to build up ● Not paying child maintenance as agreed or at all ● Running up bills in your name (creation of debt) ● Maxing out your line of credit
<p>Sexual Violence Sexual violence includes any form of sexual activity that takes place without the full and freely given consent of one of the people involved. It includes sexual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raping you ● Using force, threats, or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts ● Making you feel guilty for not having sex

<p>degradation and any form of physical or emotional coercion or manipulation into any type of sexual activity that is against the wishes of one of the people involved. Any unwanted sexual activity from sexual touching to rape between spouses, cohabitants, partners or ex-partners is a form of sexual violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any degrading treatment based on your sexual orientation ● Withholding contraception or controlling your access to it ● Making you watch pornography or forcing you to participate in the making of it ● Sharing, or threatening to share, intimate images online or with friends, family or colleagues
<p>Social Abuse This involves the systematic isolation of one person in the relationship from their family and friends or from social activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forbidding or physically preventing the person from going out or meeting people, ● Forbidding or physically preventing the person from engaging in or attending for work or any other appointment. ● spreading malicious rumours in an attempt to ruin your reputation.
<p>Harassment, including Social Media or Online Harassment:</p> <p>Behaviour used to pursue, stalk or intimidate the other person in the relationship. The intention of this type of abuse is usually to harm the victim emotionally or to cause damage to their image or reputation or how they are viewed by others. Online abuse involves the use of technologies such as mobile phone texting, electronic communication or social networking to carry out these behaviours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using tracking devices to monitor your locations and activities ● Sending excessive amounts of voice calls, emails and texts ● Denying access to technology to isolate you ● Sending abusive messages online to threaten you and/or your family ● Sharing intimate and private pictures or messages online