

Domestic Abuse *at Work*

Employer duties, time off rights, confidentiality, how to support colleagues
and where to get urgent help.

 Last reviewed: August 2026

 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 · ACAS

 England, Wales & Scotland

ukworkrights.co.uk

What is domestic abuse?

- The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** defines domestic abuse as physical, emotional, coercive, economic or psychological abuse between intimate partners or family members
- Domestic abuse **affects 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men** in their lifetime
- It does not have to be physical — **coercive control, financial abuse and stalking** are all covered
- Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity or income
- The workplace is often where abuse is most visible — patterns of calls, monitoring, turning up at work
- Colleagues and managers are often the first to notice warning signs

▲ SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Unexplained injuries or absences
- Controlling calls or messages at work
- Increased anxiety, withdrawal, poor concentration

Employer duties and your workplace rights

- Employers have a **duty of care** for employees' wellbeing — including situations of domestic abuse that affect work
- ACAS guidance strongly recommends employers have a **domestic abuse policy**
- You may be entitled to **paid or unpaid leave** to attend court hearings, move home, seek legal advice or attend appointments
- Your employer should treat absence related to domestic abuse with **sensitivity and confidentiality**
- New Zealand-style **domestic abuse leave** is advocated in the UK — some employers already offer it voluntarily

✓ CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything you disclose to HR or a manager about domestic abuse should be treated as **strictly confidential**. Your employer should not share it without your consent except where there is an immediate safety risk.

💡 PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS

Your employer can help by: changing your work location or hours, withholding your address from company records, screening calls, and liaising with building security.

Getting support — for yourself or a colleague

1

If you are in immediate danger — call 999

Or use the Silent Solution: call 999 from a mobile and press 55 if you cannot speak.

2

National Domestic Abuse Helpline — 0808 2000 247

Free, confidential, 24/7. Run by Refuge. Also available via web chat at nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

3

Talk to HR or a trusted manager

Ask what your employer's domestic abuse policy says. Request practical adjustments — confidentially. You do not have to give details if you don't want to.

4

Apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO)

Police can apply for an emergency DVPO to remove an abuser from the home. You can also apply for a Non-Molestation Order through the courts.

5

Contact Citizens Advice or Shelter

For housing, financial and legal advice. Many local authorities have domestic abuse housing teams who can arrange emergency accommodation.

URGENT & FREE SUPPORT

You are not *alone*

Confidential support is available 24/7. Your workplace can help too.

NATIONAL DA HELPLINE — 24/7

0808 2000 247

nationaldahelpline.org.uk

MEN'S ADVICE LINE

0808 801 0327

mensadvice.org.uk

GALOP — LGBT+ ABUSE

0800 999 5428

galop.org.uk

EMERGENCY SERVICES

999 (or 55 if silent)

nationaldahelpline.org.uk

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Flexible Working

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TOOLBOX TALK

Discrimination at Work

ukworkrights.co.uk/toolbox-discrimination.html

FREE GUIDE

Domestic abuse and work (England, Wales and Scotland)

ukworkrights.co.uk/guide-domestic-abuse-work-gb.html

Also: [Northern Ireland](#)