

Government to review support in the workplace for survivors of domestic abuse

- Review of employment rights for survivors of domestic abuse to look at what more could be done to help survivors in the workplace
- Views sought on availability of flexible working and unplanned leave for domestic abuse survivors
- Part of the government's wider approach to tackling domestic abuse

The availability of flexible working, unplanned leave and other employment needs will be examined in a new review of how employers and government could better support domestic abuse survivors at work.

The review, launched by Business Minister Paul Scully, will look at options to improve the workplace for survivors, including how employers can help tackle economic abuse, such as by paying wages to a different bank account or making emergency salary payments available for those in real financial hardship.

Domestic abuse has a profound impact which goes far beyond what they face at home at home, with one in 5 survivors needing to take time off work due to abuse.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

Domestic abuse may occur in the home, but its impact stretches into every aspect of survivors' lives.

This review aims to give employers the confidence and knowledge to support workers affected by domestic abuse. It will build the evidence base for possible future action by government and employers, to ensure that survivors are properly supported at work.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime which often strips victims of their independence and denies them the opportunity to succeed and thrive.

Just as domestic abuse can affect every aspect of someone's life, including their work, we are committed to supporting victims wherever possible, be that through legislation such as the Domestic Abuse Bill, or through working with employers to understand what more can be done.

Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner, said:

We all have a part to play in identifying and responding to domestic abuse, and when done effectively and sensitively employers can play a pivotal role in supporting survivors to rebuild their lives. I strongly welcome the government's commitment to enhance support through the workplace in recognition of this.

Elizabeth Filkin, Chair, Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse said:

We are very pleased to hear of this timely review. Employers are key to reducing and preventing domestic abuse.

Our member employers are helping employees who are victims of domestic abuse, providing training and information for employees on how to spot domestic abuse and access help for colleagues, friends and relatives.

Dame Vera Baird QC, the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales said:

I welcome this review as it is vitally important we do all we can to raise awareness of domestic abuse across society. Everyone should be alert to the possibility that friends, family members and colleagues could be at risk.

Having a job and spending time away from their abusers can provide a degree of independence which can be crucially important for those suffering abuse. Employers should be encouraged to do all they can to ensure that they are aware of the issues, trained to recognise when people may be at risk, and to put measures in place to help and support their employees who may be experiencing domestic abuse in a sensitive and practical way.

I am aware of a scheme in Northumbria where around 400 public and private employers agreed to have nominated employees champions in their staff who other employees could easily go to, which is important as some people are uncomfortable reporting directly to their manager or employer.

I would like to like to see excellent examples such as this become the norm. And I would encourage anyone who can to contribute to this review – which will hopefully lead to positive change in work places everywhere – to do so.

Peter Cheese, Chief Executive of the CIPD, said:

The CIPD welcomes this government review on the important issue of domestic abuse and what can be done by employers to support staff that are experiencing abuse.

Far too many people have their lives destroyed by domestic abuse and there is growing evidence of increases of incidents during the lockdown and the current crisis. Domestic abuse is a societal issue, but also a workplace issue. Work should be a safe place for people where they feel they can ask for support. EHRC research also finds that 75% of those enduring domestic abuse are targeted at work, from harassing phone calls and abusive partners arriving at the office unannounced.

Employers can help create a safe and supportive workplace culture by raising awareness, and through providing the right policies and guidance for managers and staff as well as signposting to sources of support.

The review comes as the government's ground-breaking Domestic Abuse Bill continues through Parliament which will bring into law a statutory definition of domestic abuse that includes, coercive or controlling behaviour, as well as emotional and economic abuse. The Bill will also provide police forces with new powers through the Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order, as well as place a duty on local authorities in England to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.

Notes to editors

The review aims to ensure survivors are given the support they deserve within the workplace, whether that is an outlet for reporting abuse, financial assistance or as a source of emotional support.

It will begin with a call for written evidence from stakeholders, on the specific employment needs of domestic abuse survivors, and how they are met by current employment rights and practices.

As part of the process, the government will explore examples of best practice from employers within the UK and evidence from other countries and how they approach domestic abuse, to see how the UK's current employment framework could be enhanced.

The review will also include a series of roundtables, run by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Home Office (HO), with organisations and individuals who wish to share their views directly.

Written submissions will be accepted until 9 September and should be sent to domesticabuse.employmentreview@beis.gov.uk, answering one of the below open questions:

- What practical circumstances arise in relation to domestic abuse and work?

- What support can be offered in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse?
- What is possible with the existing framework?
- What does current best practice look like?
- What is the potential to do more?