



Human Resources

# Domestic Violence – Employee Guide

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## **1. Introduction**

This guide supports our [Wellbeing Policy](#). We recognise that there may be some employees who are experiencing incidents of domestic violence, so it is important that we provide employees and managers with information to raise awareness of the problem and how it can impact the business, together with support and assistance to help deal with the problem.

Domestic violence can have an impact on an individual's performance at work, for example, punctuality, attendance, health and safety, capability and productivity. By providing a supportive working environment, we can help an individual cope with the situation and minimise the impact on work.

This guide outlines all the support available to you at Nationwide if you are experiencing domestic abuse, what to do if a colleague approaches you about their experiences and details of organisations you can contact for support.

### **1.1 What is domestic violence?**

Incidents of domestic violence have a serious impact on those who experience it. Domestic violence is defined as any violence between family members, including current or former partners both of a heterosexual and same sex nature, whenever and wherever the violence occurs. It may also be controlling behaviours or threats of a physical, sexual, emotional or financial nature. It harms women and men of all ages, cultures and backgrounds.

## **2. If you are experiencing domestic violence**

The most important thing you can do if you are experiencing domestic violence is to tell someone. This can be difficult but remember domestic violence is much more common than most people realise, so you are not alone. People do care and want to help.

If you are experiencing domestic violence the pressure and stress may affect you at work. For example, your level of performance may suffer if you are worried and unable to concentrate. You may find it difficult to participate in social events because of the reaction of your partner or perhaps you need time off to seek help.

### **2.1 Where can you go for help?**

If you feel comfortable, try to speak with your manager. If you prefer, you may also wish to confide with a friend or colleague or HR. Telling someone at work will help them understand your circumstances and they will be able to help you identify the support available at Nationwide.

Any information you share will be treated in confidence. However, if you are in danger of violence, or there is a conflict at work, it may be difficult for someone to keep this secret. You will need to take responsibility to avoid placing an unnecessary burden on a colleague, perhaps by giving them permission to tell someone else on your behalf.

If you are a member, you can also contact the Nationwide Group Staff Union (NGSU) for support and guidance on 01295 710767.

There are a number of external organisations that can offer you help. Appendix A contains contact details for a range of internal and external contacts who may be able to offer you help.

## 2.2 How can Nationwide help you?

If you are experiencing domestic violence, we can help by providing a safe working environment, understanding the impact of domestic violence, offering emotional support and practical help. We have a range of policies that can help you:

**Time Off:** If you are experiencing domestic violence or have recently removed yourself from the situation you may need to request time off to deal with specific situations such as court attendance, to move to safe housing or simply to take holiday to be free from day-to-day demands. There are a range of [Time Off](#) and [Family Friendly](#) policies that provide specific paid or unpaid leave and requests for such leave will be treated sympathetically. Talk to your manager about any time off you need.

**Welfare Fund:** The Welfare Fund can provide emergency financial help in some circumstances. Interest free loans are £500 and may be available. These are normally repaid by deductions from salary. Our [Financial Support and Benefits Policy](#) contains further details.

**EmployeeCare:** A free, confidential and independent counselling and information service is available to all Nationwide Group employees. The service provides a free-phone helpline giving employees 24-hour access to telephone counselling and personal legal information. You can contact EmployeeCare helpline on 0800 756 9804.

**Managing Customer Conflict:** Nationwide will not tolerate violence at work. Although it is unlikely domestic violence will transfer to the workplace, guidance and a risk assessment procedure is available to help you minimise the risks of workplace violence. Further information can be found in the Branch Security Manual on the intranet.

## 2.3 How can domestic violence impact the workplace?

You may have a joint Nationwide account with the person who is committing domestic violence, or be aware of other accounts held by them or other family members. Although you may be under pressure, do not be tempted to make unauthorised transactions or to disclose information that breaches the data protection laws. You could put your job at risk.

## 3. Supporting colleagues experiencing domestic violence

There are several ways that you can support a colleague who is experiencing domestic violence.

### 3.1 Understanding domestic violence

It is essential to understand the impact domestic violence can have on an individual as this may have a bearing on the way they act at work. For example, someone may be unwilling to undertake overtime or participate in office social events because of the reaction of their partner. It is important that they are not made to feel guilty or put under pressure for not joining in. Their behaviour and demeanour may be affected by domestic violence and you will need to show understanding and tolerance. Behavioural changes may be a sign to encourage a colleague to seek help. ***Remember – do not jump to conclusions as there may be other explanations for these behaviours.***

### 3.2 Support and encouragement

If a colleague confides in you make time to listen, reassure and support them. Try to respond in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner and encourage them to seek advice from relevant agencies. Encourage them to tell someone at work; their manager, HR or Union Representative, who will be able to give more advice on the support that may be available to them.

Domestic violence can go on for years so it may be difficult for an individual to take action to stop it, so don't be disappointed or feel snubbed if they choose not to act immediately. Be patient and continue to offer support.

### **3.3 Discussing domestic violence and work related issues**

It will be difficult for an employee to tell you about their circumstances. You must keep any information they share confidential but you may need to encourage them to take further action if you fear for their safety or feel that there is a conflict at work.

It is possible that an employee shares a Nationwide account with the person committing domestic violence or is aware of other accounts they or other family members hold. They may be under pressure financially, but it is important that they do not put their job at risk by conducting unauthorised transactions or disclosing information. You may need to counsel them tactfully about this - if they need some financial help they may be eligible for a welfare loan.

It is possible that the person committing domestic violence will be known to you, perhaps through a social event. This may make it difficult to deal with them, especially if they are a customer in their own right. Do not try to intervene or confront them - but encourage the employee to contact their manager or an external organisation for help.

## **4. Employees who commit domestic violence**

It is important to encourage someone who commits domestic violence to seek help to address their behaviour. Some organisations provide programmes designed to help change behaviour and develop respectful, non abusive relationships. Contact information for various organisations is provided below.

Although it is not Nationwide's responsibility to take action against an employee who is suspected of being violent to a partner or ex partner, if an employee commits act of abuse or violence at work, action may be taken under our [Disciplinary Policy](#).

## Appendix A Useful Contacts

### Internal Contacts

Ask HR (Raising a case via '[Create an AskHR Case](#)' on the Intranet OR 01793 556808 option 1)

[EmployeeCare](#) 0800 756 9804.

Nationwide Group Staff Union (NGSU) 01295 710767

### External Contacts

Anyone experiencing domestic violence, male or female, can contact statutory agencies like the police, social services, local authority housing departments, health services, or voluntary agencies for help, information and support. Listed below are some national organisations you may wish to contact.

- **Crown Prosecution Service Public Enquiry Point**  
020 3357 0000  
[www.cps.gov.uk](http://www.cps.gov.uk)  
Provides general information and practical information (not legal advice) on the CPS and advice on who to contact. There are CPS domestic violence co-ordinators in each local area
- **NSPCC**  
National Child Protection Helpline  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)  
0808 800 500 (Text – 88858)  
[help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)  
Free confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk, including children themselves.
- **Police**  
Look in the phone book for details of local contacts. Police forces have specialist 'vulnerable persons' or 'domestic violence' units to offer information about options, whether or not victims go through the prosecution process. In an emergency call the police on 999.
- **Samaritans**  
08457 90 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)  
24-hour Confidential, emotional support for anyone in crisis.
- **Shelterline**  
0808 800 4444  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)  
24-hour national housing advice line
- **Victim Support**  
0845 30 30 900  
[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)  
Trained staff and volunteers offer free and confidential information.

#### Support for Women:

- **Action on Elder Abuse**  
For information and support about abuse against older women.

Astral House, 1268 London Road, London, SW16 4ER  
0808 80 881 41  
[www.elderabuse.org.uk](http://www.elderabuse.org.uk)  
[aea@ace.org.uk](mailto:aea@ace.org.uk)

- **Domestic Violence Intervention Programme**  
PO Box 2838, London, W6 9ZE  
020 7633 9181  
[www.dvip.org.uk](http://www.dvip.org.uk)
- **Rape Crisis Federation (England and Wales)**  
Telephone: 0808 802 9999  
[www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)  
[info@rapecrisis.co.uk](mailto:info@rapecrisis.co.uk)  
A referral service to individual women who are seeking advice and/or support around the issues of rape and sexual abuse/assault by putting them in contact with their nearest/local rape and sexual abuse counselling service.
- **Refuge (national domestic violence charity)**  
0808 2000 247  
[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

Support for Men:

- **Survivors UK**  
0845 122 1201  
[www.survivorsuk.co.uk](http://www.survivorsuk.co.uk)  
Survivors is for men who have been sexually assaulted by anyone at any time of their life.

Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexuals and Transgender people:

- **Broken Rainbow Hotline**  
0300 999 5428  
[www.lgbt-dv.org.uk](http://www.lgbt-dv.org.uk)  
A reporting and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people experiencing domestic violence.
- **SOLA – Survivors Of Lesbian Partnership Abuse**  
Helpline: 020 7328 7389  
[solalondon@hotmail.com](mailto:solalondon@hotmail.com)  
London-based group SOLA offer support to women who have been abused by a female (ex)partner and raise awareness of this still very closeted issue. Group members, all survivors of lesbian abuse, run a national helpline and self-support groups.

For more information please visit:

BBC Hitting Home Campaign – [www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh) - information, help and support for anyone affected by domestic violence

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