

September 2020

# A review of employment rights for survivors of domestic abuse

**JUNO WOMEN'S AID**



**Safety.  
Support.  
Strength.**

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## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Information obtained in this report.....	4
Domestic abuse in context .....	4
Who we are.....	5
Summary of Recommendations.....	6
Our Findings.....	7
Q1 What practical circumstances arise in relation to domestic abuse and work? .....	7
Q2 What support can be offered in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse? .....	12
Q3 What is possible with the existing framework?.....	15
Q4 What does current best practice look like? .....	16
Q5 What is the potential to do more? .....	21

## Foreword

Juno Women's Aid welcomes this Government review into the employment rights for survivors of domestic abuse.

The issue of economic and financial abuse and its impact has only recently been recognised by policy makers and legislators. We congratulate the work of our sister organisations, specifically Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) and Women's Aid England, for their work in campaigning to raise awareness of the harm caused by economic and financial abuse on women and children and for its inclusion in the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Bill.

Far too many women suffer the harmful impact of economic and financial abuse in intimate partner relationships. This form of abuse harms them and their children too. Its effects can remain with women for many years after leaving an abusive relationship<sup>1</sup>.

Financial institutions, statutory and voluntary organisations and specialist violence against women services all have a role to play in ensuring women's experiences are heard, understood and that they receive the support needed to move forward and live lives free from violence and abuse and its after effects. There is also a role for employers to support their staff and ensure that they are supported, sign posted to sources of help and able to move forward from lives curtailed by abuse without being further victimised in a system or process that does not recognise their experience.

Juno Women's Aid is a female led by and for organisation that has supported women in Nottingham City and South Nottinghamshire for the past 40 years. In 2019/20 we supported more than 5,000 women across our services. Many of whom will have experienced economic and financial abuse within their intimate relationships and financial hardship after leaving. Our experiences of working with women, teenagers and children has provided the evidence submitted in this consultation response.

We hope this report in some ways adds to and informs a positive outcome for those women experiencing economic abuse and the services in place to support them.



Yasmin Rehman  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>1</sup>[https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SEA-Roundtable-Report\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SEA-Roundtable-Report_FINAL-1.pdf)

## Introduction

1. In March, 2020, Juno Women's Aid (Juno) held an event at the Capital One head offices in Nottingham city centre exploring how employers could support survivors of domestic abuse in the workplace. We were joined by HR directors, CEOs, small business owners, and other interested parties invested in addressing domestic abuse in the workplace. Several speakers took to the stage including MD of Facilities Management Consultancy, Dysart 57 Ltd, and International Domestic Abuse Campaigner, Fiona Bowman, Business Development Lead for Women's Aid England, Ruth Mason, and Head of Commissioning at Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nicola Wade, to instigate conversations and share insights of abusive behaviour in the workplace.
2. When Business Minister, Paul Scully, launched a review of employment rights for survivors of domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>, Juno Women's Aid gathered and advanced -- through one-to-one interviews -- the information obtained from March's event, of which has been collated into this report.

## Information obtained in this report

1. Seven interviews took place online over the period of three weeks regarding this review and all participants signed a consent form agreeing to share their experiences and opinions. Due to the wealth of data and information we have access to, as a specialist domestic abuse organisation, we explored all five questions the Business Minister is investigating:
  - a. What practical circumstances arise in relation to domestic abuse and work?
  - b. What support can be offered in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse?
  - c. What is possible with the existing framework?
  - d. What does current best practice look like?
  - e. What is the potential to do more?
2. This report is formatted in response to the above questions. A series of recommendations have been created as a result.
3. The recommendations outlined in this report are directed at improving workplace culture and fine tuning policies and procedures across the multi-faceted UK work force. The recommendations also acknowledge the difficulties for both employer and employee during lockdown and further coronavirus related circumstances, where survivors are working from home.

## Domestic abuse in context

1. In the year ending March 2019, domestic abuse affected 2.4million adults<sup>3</sup>, which equates to 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men being at risk of abuse in their lifetime<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-review-support-in-the-workplace-for-survivors-of-domestic-abuse>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevaleanceandtrendsendlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lwa.org.uk/understanding-abuse/statistics.htm>

Domestic abuse accounts of 16% of all recorded crime and is the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless.

2. According to BBC Panorama, a call to the police was made every 30 seconds regarding domestic abuse<sup>5</sup> and Juno encountered a 200% increase in Helpline calls in comparison to the same time period last year. In the first three weeks of lockdown, 14 women and two children were killed by an abusive former or current partner. Domestic abuse is a global pandemic fuelled by the response of the Coronavirus; it is not confined to one area of the world and it considerably impacts the UK economy.
3. In January 2020, employment rates for women were at a record high of 72.5% (15.66 million)<sup>6</sup>, but the detrimental impact of Coronavirus has pushed women back an estimated 50 years<sup>7</sup>. The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the UCL Institute of Education found that mothers were 47% more likely to have permanently lost their job or quit, and 14% were more likely to have been furloughed since the start of the crisis. Not only does this signify the increased care and home burdens of women, but the lack of support available to enable them to live independent lives contributing to the workforce and thus, the economy.
4. Leaving a job and losing a home as a result of abuse puts women at a financial disadvantage and adds further pressure on the government. The economic cost of domestic abuse is estimated at £66 billion annually<sup>8</sup>, with £14 billion arising from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity as a consequence of domestic abuse. We estimate that these costs are likely to be higher as a result of Coronavirus and will likely increase year upon year.
5. In addition to a loss of earnings, women can become trapped in a cycle of poverty and an increased reliance on Universal Credit when trying to rebuild their lives after abuse. This has ongoing mental health and wellbeing consequences, which, no doubt, adds further strain on government resources and the ability of businesses to perform.

#### Who we are

1. Juno Women's Aid is the largest specialist domestic abuse organisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and the fourth largest in the UK. We work with women, children, and teenagers who have been affected by domestic abuse and run a wide range of services including the 24-hour Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Freephone Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/domestic-violence-women-doncaster-death-toll-coronavirus-a9636461.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/march2020#employment>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/29/covid-19-crisis-could-set-women-back-decades-experts-fear>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>

2. In the last 12 months, we've worked with 5,324 women, 462 children and young people fostered 53 pets and taken 11,000 calls on our Helpline
3. At any one time, we're supporting 500-600 women and children in Nottingham and South Nottinghamshire.
4. From this review and later outcomes, we hope to help keep women in employment, paying taxes, leading lives free from abuse. We hope to encourage employers, colleagues and survivors to signpost and accept support. We hope to work alongside the government and businesses of all sizes to help them thrive.
5. Juno is grateful to Business Minister Paul Scully for focusing greater attention on the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace for survivors. Juno is also grateful to the government for providing emergency funding throughout the Coronavirus pandemic and continuing their campaigning efforts to help raise awareness of domestic abuse.

### Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Detail
Statutory guidance for businesses to address domestic abuse in the workplace	Statutory policy and procedures for businesses should be implemented to establish clear pathways of support for survivors of abuse. This should cover what the specific business can offer, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), benevolent charities, local signposting, relevant company policies and how the survivor's data will be recorded and used. The enforcement of statute will make domestic abuse a priority for businesses. The statute must detail what is "reasonable".
Support for corporate enterprises	Following the statute, support for corporate enterprises should include the following: Grants to allow for unplanned leave, fixed emergency funding, clarity on direct transfers within the company for survivors and perpetrators, allowing of advanced wages, flexible working, access to EAPs, access to third parties to support survivors and access to benevolent charities.
Support for Small and Medium Enterprises and third sector organisations	Following the statute, support for small, medium and third sector organisations should include the following: Bursaries and grants to allow for unplanned leave, fixed emergency funding, advanced wages, flexible working, access to EAPs, access to benevolent charities, a fixed budget for internal communications/marketing work and access to third parties to support survivors.
Engagement with specialist domestic abuse organisations	All businesses, should be made aware of local, specialist organisations and work with these organisations to support survivors of abuse. This should include, but is not limited to: Signposting, creation of support plans and risk assessments, a direct contact in said organisation and training for staff at all levels.

Training	Mandatory training for all staff members on an annual basis to understand the complexity of domestic abuse, responding to domestic abuse, understanding the company policies in relation to abuse, addressing perpetrators in the workplace, the use of language and funding for materials.
Funding for specialist domestic abuse organisation intervention	For the increased work alongside employers, specialist domestic abuse organisations will require additional funding to provide further training resources and a direct line of contact. This could also include a new role within these organisations to be part of an external business support team. Funding specialist organisations to provide workplace materials and training is also necessary.

## Our Findings

### Q1 What practical circumstances arise in relation to domestic abuse and work?

As the Domestic Abuse Bill passes through parliament, the statutory definition includes physical, emotional, economical, sexual and coercive control – all of which can be perpetrated at work. Below, we include interview quotes regarding the practical circumstances and experiences that have affected interviewees in the workplace.

#### 1A An inability to work

*“Last year I had to give up work because I couldn’t cope with going through the court process, all the battles I was having and trying to juggle work and my children, so I just gave up work for a short while.”*

Georgina, Career’s Advisor

The physical and mental drain on Georgia, a Career’s Advisor, is clear. The external worries and stresses can quickly translate into workplace issues such as a lack of concentration, dips in performance, attendance issues, sickness, lateness etc. This can then lead to disciplinary processes. We explore this more in section 1C.

*“There’s been times when my mental health is so rock bottom, I can’t even function to go into work. And also from a manager’s point of view, if you work in a shop or something, you don’t necessarily want black eyes on show and stuff, so there needs to be that understanding, but then people feel they kind of lose the job as well.”*

Jordan, Support Worker

Jordan suffered significant abuse both in the workplace and in her home. The perpetrator lived and worked on the same premises as her and often used his position at work, also a support worker, to coercively control her and closely monitor her schedule. The fear of losing a job is a primary reason why some survivors choose not to disclose.

*“Because we were both support workers, we were in the community a lot. It would kind of be like coercive control. When I was going to support men, for instance, he would kind of be like, “oh, they fancy you, you must fancy them.” (...) He used to take my car, which then was harder for me for work. So I'd walk from house to house, that kind of thing. Or he would drop me off at a service user's house, take my car, and then come pick me up, take me to another one to make sure that I was going to the places I should have been.”*

Jordan, Support Worker

Linda is a Councillor for Nottingham City Council and also works for British Telecommunications. She has managed several cases where abuse was involved in the workplace and was also involved in the Daphne Initiative in 1997.

*“One of my call centre workers was not allowed to work overtime by her partner because he realised that she would be in the office, unsupervised, with men.*

*Another one was constantly interrupted by her partner phoning at work and upsetting her. And if she didn't pick up the phone call, that was a massive problem, a trigger. There would be periods of repeated calls throughout the day, “what are you doing? Who are you with? Who did you go to lunch with? What time are you coming home?” And also exclusion from work social events as well. That team building that you get at work, you'll find that women particularly who are going through domestic violence are not allowed to participate in those events because there's alcohol, there's a risk, “she might be unfaithful to me, she might find somebody better than me.””*

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

Linda's experience clearly demonstrates the impracticalities a perpetrator can enforce on a survivor to force them out of work. The woman Linda describes is unable to participate in team building activities, which is a detriment not just to the survivor, but to the team she is a part of and the department of the company, which affects work culture (see section 1D). The constant interruptions, distractions, anxiousness and worry can contribute to underperformance in her work.

Without knowledge of abuse, this underperformance can be attributed to disciplinary worthy offences in the workplace. For example, issues related to laziness, attendance, lack of focus, missing deadlines etc. For many of these women, it is easier to leave the job rather than disclose the abuse. There are immense feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment.

“... at the moment we have a situation where (...) there’s been an allegation against a partner who works in the same work place. We haven’t got it settled yet but my view is very much that the partner should be moved if there’s a prosecution in place; it’s the partner that should move, not the alleged victim.”

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

The inability to take permanent action where domestic abuse presents itself in the workplace is a topic that came up in the interviews repeatedly. Without a conviction, it seemed, employers found it more difficult to support survivors within their own remits. Domestic abuse prosecutions fell by 24% at end of 2019<sup>9</sup>, so to solely rely on prosecutions before action is taken to support survivors at work, is inefficient at best. Safety plans, risk assessments and professional support for survivors, employers and colleagues is possible if they were to engage with local, specialist organisations -- more on this in section 5C.

Preventing perpetrator behaviour must be discussed as well as survivor protection. Actions that could be taken if the perpetrator was in the same workplace could be: Transfer to an alternate department, change work shifts so the perpetrator and survivor do not cross paths, moving of desks etc. Survivors should not be at a detriment as a result of perpetrator behaviour.

*“I was at the point where I couldn’t take public transport without having full on meltdowns. I was really not functioning. I was shutting down because of the abuse and the complexity and the responsibility of the job. (...) The whole thing lasted five months. The doctor put me on bed rest. I came back [to the UK] in November and I couldn’t work until April, but I didn’t admit that to everyone. I kept going to job interviews but inside I was like, I couldn’t even leave the house half of the time. I was getting panic attacks, I was getting agoraphobia, and it was just awful.”*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

Sara-Louise has spent time both in the private and voluntary sector working primarily as a personal assistant. Her above quote demonstrates the intense mental health difficulties she faced as a result of an abusive relationship even after she was able to flee. Access to ongoing support within and external to the workplace could help keep women physically and

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/30/domestic-abuse-prosecutions-fell-by-25-at-end-of-2019>

mentally healthy, in work and a contributing member of their local community. This is explored further in section 5C.

### *1B Conversations about domestic abuse*

It's a conversation even the most trained professional can sometimes find difficult to navigate, but these essential conversations can potentially save lives. It's imperative that employers invest time into training staff, encouraging an open door policy and a zero-tolerance work culture around domestic abuse. Communication from top level down is important to instill a non-toxic work culture (section 1D).

*"I remember there was an incident when I had my eye socket cracked and my manager asking, and I just kind of said, "oh, it was him. It was an accident". And they kind of like, questioned, "oh how did that happen?" And that was it. There was no more talk of it, but obviously it wasn't an accident. That was literally it, maybe they had assumptions, but they didn't want to ask. I don't know.*

Jordan, Support Worker

With clear policies and procedures in place, this was a prime opportunity to provide Jordan with access to support and encourage her to open up about what was happening at home. It is clear from these interviews that we still live in a culture where domestic issues are considered "private matters". Domestic abuse is everybody's business and we all have a role in eradicating its existence. Knowing how to start and navigate these conversations is an essential part of training (section 5C).

### *1C Disciplinary action*

Underperformance at work, changes in behaviour and capability are all reasons, under non-abusive circumstances, for disciplinary action at work. On the record warnings can very quickly lead to dismissal without much investigation into these sudden behavioural changes and despite an appeal. Methods of control within the workplace is exhausting and disruptive. Taking women out of the workplace is a detriment to the UK economy.

*"At the time, I was going through quite significant domestic abuse and had very little support. (...) I was on probation and she kept extending my probation and eventually let me go. Sometimes, it was really hard to do my job."*

Georgia, Career's Advisor

Part of Georgia's role was to support young people in school; she worked within the safeguarding team and was subcontracted by the local council. For her, one of the biggest

failures and disappointments, was that no one offered her the same level of support as she was providing to others on a daily basis. There was no mention of risk assessments, safeguarding measures, no conversation. She was let down continually by her employer, who failed to spot the most basic of signs.

When Georgia filed a formal complaint against one of her colleagues for bullying, she was persuaded not to by her manager.

*“Part of the issue I’ve had is that women have ended up on warnings for either attendance or performance, but then disclosed that, “this is the reason why I’m not turning up to work.” I think there is a bit (...) being able to roll back some of those warnings, because once you get a warning on your record, it’s usually there in place for a year. And if you have any more time off in the year, or a further dip in performance in the year, it can take you to the next stage of warning and the next thing you know, you’re out the door.”*

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

Where survivors face dismissal or even blame following a disclosure, particularly when the workplace becomes a sanctuary, they may be even less likely to disclose further or seek help.

#### *1D The Impact of a Work Culture*

Work culture can be defined as a sum of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that create a work environment. A healthy workplace culture aligns employee behaviours and company policies with the overall goals of the company, while also considering the well-being of individuals<sup>10</sup>. A positive work culture affects performance, happiness, engagement, retention and can also attract strong talent. An unhealthy work culture can be extremely harmful to a business.

*“They were very rude about members of the public that we were dealing with. They’d make jokes about them having issues and things like that. And to say it’s a safeguarding team, I just think it’s ridiculous. (...) Even within the social care team, they were very rude and judgmental and very opinionated about the families that were coming in and they were working with.”*

Georgia, Career’s Advisor

A toxic environment such as this one, makes it less likely for survivors to come forward and disclose abuse. As discussed in Citizen's Advice's report, A Link in The Chain, social groups

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/work-culture>

can, unwittingly, sustain abuse. A non-disclosing environment can discourage survivors from seeking support. Informal networks are powerful in bridging the gap between survivors and specialists, which helps improve work culture, performance and retention rates.<sup>11</sup>

In conversation about her work environment at the Multiplayer Guys, a video game developer company, Antonia considered the role men play in standing up to abuse in the workplace.

*“I think it’s the sort of environment where if somebody else would take a stand, everyone else would happily get in board with that (...). I don’t think men are that brave and comfortable to step out.*

*It’s hard being the constant female women’s advocate for women’s rights, human rights, all those sort of things, in a space like video games when you’re the lone voice.”*

Antonia, Office Manager

To develop a united culture, engaging with multiple communities including faith groups, ethnic minorities, LGBT+ etc. is crucial to developing a cohesive understanding and stance against domestic abuse. The White Ribbon campaign engages with men and boys to raise awareness of male violence against women, but outside of our sector, it is not widely known. More public facing campaigns could be utilised to raise awareness of abuse in different communities and workplaces, to create a “safe space” to have difficult conversations (see section 5C).

## Q2 What support can be offered in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse?

Each workplace is unique with its own set of capabilities. This is why clear guidelines, procedures and understanding is important to remain frank and to give survivors options to either leave or remain in work, safely. Flexibility, knowledge and empathy were broad themes in answering this question.

### 2A Employee Assistance Programmes

Some of the women we spoke with expressed high regard for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) such as Hospitality Action and Bupa. The provision of emergency loans, advice, and a sympathetic ear to talk to contributed to the wellbeing of survivors in and outside of work. However, it was noted that monetary support from EAPs have significantly decreased in recent years.

*"In the Hospitality sector there were a lot of applications, but it was noticeable that the money they were giving out was going down. So where it had been eight or nine hundred pounds, now it would be like, 250 and obviously there's a limit to what you can do but they were very good and they were relatively fast as well, from memory.*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

If EAPs or benevolent charities were made available to all employees, this could be another avenue of support for survivors of abuse. But the need for efficient funding, especially for small and medium sized businesses, needs to be taken into consideration.

### 2B Duty of care

Domestic abuse affects 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 men and 75% of people in the UK's workplaces. Many employees will dedicate 40 hours of their week to a business, under the noses of supervisors, colleagues, managers and senior management. Those hours are opportunities to have a profound impact on someone's life and create a loyal hub of employees.

*"I know enough to know there are people in the studio who would be appalled [by abusive behaviour in the workplace]. But do I know if they would take an active stand and do something? I can't be sure of that. And that's surprising if I think that because as I said, I'm married to one of them."*

Antonia, Office Manager

If an employee is under the impression that abusive behaviour won't be reported, picked up on or excused, it creates the perfect environment for perpetrators to advance, while businesses and survivors suffer. Similar to health and safety regulations at work, colleagues and managers have a duty of care to protect employees and ensure they are safe from abuse in their work environment.

*“But it is a fact that if someone’s under your nose 40 hours a week, it’s a bit like a child in education and teachers now picking up abuse. Your employer picking up domestic abuse is exactly the same principle.”*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

Jocelyn, below, has had several incidents of domestic abuse in her workplace, and although her workplace policies are examples of best practice (see section 4), she has found her team often backfilling work as a result of the support on offer.

*“(…) our policy says to give you flexibility, and of course we should. But that work still needs backfilling somewhere. Where’s that support for the organisation to continue that work? To backfill that manager who is having to support that staff member as well. You are carrying a caseload all of a sudden.”*

Jocelyn, Senior Manager

Engagement with third party organisations such as EAPs, benevolent charities or specialist organisations can help ease some of the emotional and physical work burden, but we need not forget the impact on other members of staff and ensure support is available for them also.

*“I think sometimes with managers, they believe that once you've left the door, that's that, there's no duty of care. (...) I believe managers still have a duty of care for someone's safety even if they've left.”*

Jordan, Support Worker

*"I've seen with COVID how everyone deals with change, and what employers are very important for, I think, is, and I don't think they realise it, they give people not only a sense of purpose, but they give people routine (...) that person is giving 40 hours of their life to you, or whatever their commitment is. You've got members of the public going through your door every day, you've got members of your staff coming through your door."*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

### Q3 What is possible with the existing framework?

Within the existing framework, it is possible for businesses to have statutory guidelines on establishing policies that cover domestic abuse and outlines the available support offered by the business. Within the existing framework, it is also possible for businesses to allocate additional responsibilities to each employee regarding safeguarding colleagues and themselves. For example, security guards at a workplace to be equipped with safeguarding training and to be enabled, when necessary, to establish safe exit routes for survivors and to disallow non-employees entry to the premises.

*"I think naturally as human beings we tend to believe things we can see. People, quite frankly, have their own stuff so that if they're faced with something that is multi-layered and complex, and you can't see any of it, and your loyalties are torn if you know one or both parties, you've got a job to do, there's a lot to cope with."*

*I think for employers, it's important to just pair it down. I think it's important, firstly, to make it clear that you're not there to judge. You don't actually know what's going on. I think that's important because we're not saying can employers please become arbiters or moral arbiters. We're saying you are a checkpoint, people pass through this point through their daily life, could you please keep your eyes out for XYZ, which obviously will need to be defined. If XYZ presents itself, could you please then have a policy as to what to do and I guess then you need to decide what the end game would be. Well, I think accommodation is a fairly key one because that person needs somewhere to go and to function to then be able to get up the next morning and go back to work."*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

Sara-Louise has experience working for a recruitment agency and mentioned the policies in place regarding human trafficking. To help prevent economic abuse, HR departments could enforce the rule that wages be paid directly into an employee's account, as opposed to an account in a different name. This best practice example has also been relayed in Job Centres across the UK (see section 4C).

#### Q4 What does current best practice look like?

From researching this topic and conducting interviews, best practice for supporting survivors of abuse at work was on an ad-hoc basis. Employers tend to work within their emergency remit where understanding is applied, but the use of multi-agency working, effective policies and data recording, awareness at all levels of the organisation and safeguarding for the future had the best results for survivors. These items consider health and wellbeing, future career prospects and safety.

Jocelyn's case study below accounts for her experience supporting an employee at work within a specialist domestic abuse organisation.

*"(...) what I've done is worked with that individual to see how much they can do – what can you still cope with? How much trauma is this causing you and how detrimental is this to the survivor that you're still doing this work? It's down to the individual, I ask them, "can you do this work?" Will you always be reflecting on your own experiences?*

*I have suggested that, she's actually very stable and she's okay, she's just had to be flexible and take some days out here and there, but I've suggested that when she returns, that she does some clinical supervision. Because she will have cases that are very much like what she's gone through. How will she cope that that? I've suggested that she uses Bupa. I would keep a close eye on her.*

*(...) we would have to work with them and look at capability procedures or additional support and training. We would try redeployment, is there another post we could put you in that's not direct with survivors? We would try as many things as possible before dismissal.*

*I would sit with them and make notes. I would get them to do a statement and look at our domestic violence employee policy. There's also our harassment policy, safeguarding policy. There's several policies that I would look at to address it.*

*We do also work with our partner organisations so they get more specific domestic abuse support from a support worker and that's worked quite well in the past."*

Jocelyn, Senior Manager

Jocelyn's above account stresses the importance of relying on company policy and supporting the survivor through her journey. Regular check ins with the employee were made and she was referred to clinical supervision (conducted by an external organisation) and an EAP. The prevention of dismissal is clear here. The employee and manager worked together and recorded the data while trying to make the survivor as comfortable and able to perform her role, as possible. The manager was compassionate and she listened. Jocelyn had the support of the business behind her in order to support the survivor.

*“For a company like British Telecommunications, they can afford to give somebody their wages in advance, for example. They put in a process that said, ‘your wages and salary can only ever go into your account. It can never go into somebody else’s account.’*

*The other thing that they facilitate and they never really advertised it, but they were really good at it, was enabling women to transfer across the country.*

*At the call centre, they used to go through this phase of giving out your full name when you answered the call (...) that changed to first name only. That was really important because when the internet came up, one of our call centre workers gave their name and the customer, who they were having an argument with, looked up their address online and said, “I’d be waiting for you outside work.” After that incident, the company has never insisted that people give away their surnames as part of the work that they do. And if you were comfortable with it, you’d say, “I’m Linda, I’m based in Nottingham.” But if you weren’t comfortable saying that, you’d just say, “I’m Linda” and there’d be notes on the system. That was a really important point as far as protecting women from random contacts from people.*

*I do know women in our Leicester call centre whose manager has been really good about giving them time off for court hearings, for family court hearings (...) changing their address and keeping their address secret effectively from the people that they’re fleeing as well.”*

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

Linda’s experience is a great example of supporting and protecting survivors in the workplace. By rolling out “first names only” across the entire organisation, it prevented the survivor from being singled out and is also a great help for those experiencing abuse who have not yet disclosed, or, who do not know/understand that they are a survivor themselves. Keeping addresses secure is also important if the perpetrator and survivor work in the same workplace but live separately.

Linda’s case study also acknowledges the advantage of working for a larger company. Smaller businesses would be unable to provide some of the support available at somewhere like British Telecoms, for example, transferring survivors to a different branch (see section 4B).

*“My first memory was when I was in an emotionally abusive relationship for three years, but it wasn’t in this country and my boss at the time, I was in hospitality, gave me a suite they were renovating and I lived there for six weeks while I wrote my notice period.*

*At the time, my ex must have suspected that I had stayed in with the company but he had no idea where I was staying, which was wonderful. I was able to finish my remit, so I was able to leave with a reference because it would have been very easy for me to just escape and then I would have worked really hard and been looked down on by a very well-known employer. It would have ruined relationships with my colleagues (...) who were my friends, who would have been like, was she really who she said she was, you know when someone disappears overnight and you doubt who they were? So I was just able to finish the job with dignity and I was able to feel healthy and I was eating three meals a day (...) I had a roof over my head, my thinking process was better, I was eating, washing, turning up to work on time. I think dignity was a massive thing because I was able to come back to England with a reference that got me the next decent job.”*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

Sara-Louise’s above experience was while she was working as a personal assistant for Hilton Hotel. Similar to Linda’s story, accommodation would be much less likely if she was working for a smaller business.

Another important note of the case study is the importance of a reference and the detriment it could have caused to Sara-Louise’s career without that reference. The employer recognised that and gave her time to finish her work, improve her health, sustain her dignity and self-worth, and start again somewhere else, free from abuse.

#### *4A SMEs vs Corporate enterprises*

Throughout these case studies, company capabilities vary greatly depending on the size of an organisation, the specific roles held by the women, knowledge of domestic abuse and financial viability. Different levels of support should be available to businesses to help them help survivors of domestic abuse while still upholding their work responsibilities.

*"I think for small medium businesses, they have less of an ability to cope with that ad-hoc time off. So I think there is a balance to be struck where maybe there could be a statutory minimum time off that the government could put in place to enable women to effectively take time off to deal with essentials and moving, but also the ability to make an appeal out of time, to say, "I've now disclosed this domestic violence and I'm asking you to remove this warning from my record." So I do think there's something in the statute that you could do along that."*

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

In large organisations, there is the capacity to backfill roles, hire temporary help and rearrange schedules, all of which are not possible for smaller businesses. If the government could administer help to alleviate some of these inconveniences, then there's a potential to help more women stay in work.

#### *4B Coronavirus communications*

During the pandemic, new resources became available for businesses, teachers and the general public about how to talk about the coronavirus. These guidelines on difficult conversations can be applied to domestic abuse within the workplace.

The Atlantic wrote an informative article<sup>12</sup> relating communication to work culture and the importance of negating misleading information or misinformation altogether. It also touched on the uselessness of information overload and that people are "most effective when culture, context and identity align." All of these things are true in a domestic abuse context, particularly in that "misinformation inadvertently reinforces it. Dangerous ideas are contagious." Signs of abuse and perpetrator behaviour must be addressed immediately within the workplace to establish a zero tolerance culture.

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention also listed guidelines on their website<sup>13</sup> with reference to explaining the virus to children. It included: Make yourself available to listen and talk; avoid language that might blame others; pay attention to what people see and hear and discuss new actions that may be taken. These items could be applied directly to managers and supervisors in charge of a team of employees. The use of language is particularly useful when discussing domestic abuse. Victim-blaming language is rife in the media, which impacts the way people form opinions and ideas of abuse. If businesses aren't careful, similar notions will be carried out between staff members as we saw earlier with Georgina's example of a toxic work culture (section 1D).

The final example is from Health and Safety Executive, a UK government agency responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare. They issued a document, "Talking with your workers about preventing

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/how-talk-about-coronavirus/609118/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>

coronavirus,<sup>14</sup> where they write about engaging workers and the importance of two-way communication. They also mentioned third party intervention, supporting high-risk groups and addressing concerns. This comprehensive document is a great resource with clear actions for employers to refer to. It's a brilliant example of clear guidelines that can be available for employers and employees alike regarding domestic abuse in the workplace.

#### *4C Job Centre DV Champions*

In July, 2019, Secretary Amber Rudd announced increased Job Centre support for women experiencing domestic abuse<sup>15</sup>. It is a fantastic example of supporting survivors in the workplace, be them not the employees themselves.

Job Centres around the UK now have trained domestic abuse “champions” who are trained to identify and support anyone experiencing domestic abuse. They work closely with local, specialist organisations to share knowledge, expertise and provide support for survivors. Similar to what has been aforementioned, the Secretary of State also announced “that new Universal Credit claims will receive automatic guidance directing payments to be made to the main carer’s account” and “benefit easements and advance payments,” which encourages financial freedom from perpetrators.

In conversation with several women during interviews, they mentioned not knowing who to talk to. They weren't comfortable speaking to colleagues and didn't have a personal rapport with managers who they felt they could confide in. When asked how they would feel talking to a designated safeguarding lead, a domestic abuse “champion” in the workplace, almost all of them said they would have been more likely to reach out. They also mentioned having members of specialist organisations, like Juno Women’s Aid, step into the workplace to provide support, training, perhaps the presence of a “champion” would have helped.

#### *4D Linklaters*

The final example of best practice is a recent policy and support programme for survivors of domestic abuse by Linklaters, a UK-based law firm. Through this new policy, they showcased their commitment to building a safe, non-discriminative work environment<sup>16</sup>. Linklaters worked closely with Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA), a UK charity raising awareness of economic abuse, and SafeLives, a domestic abuse charity providing training for Linklaters.

The new policy provided a cohesive package for survivors of abuse to help them become financially and independently free from perpetrators. The policy included emergency accommodation, paid leave, an Emergency Assistance Fund of up to £5000 and access to SEA. SafeLives also provided training for Linklater’s HR department and “people managers” to help spot the signs of abuse and have open conversations. This stellar policy is a leading example of how survivors of abuse can be supported at work. We understand that not all businesses are in a position to provide significant financial support, but working closely with

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/talking-with-your-workers.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/increased-jobcentre-support-for-women-experiencing-domestic-abuse>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.linklaters.com/en/about-us/news-and-deals/news/2020/august/linklaters-launches-new-policy-and-support-programme-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

local, specialist organisations and access to grants and funding from elsewhere is a possibility we would like to explore.

#### Q5 What is the potential to do more?

At the start of 2019, there were 5.9 million private sector businesses; 5.82 million (98.6%) of those were small businesses (0 to 49 employees); 35,6000 (0.6%) were medium sized businesses (50 to 249 employees) and 7,700 (0.1%) were large businesses (250 or more employees)<sup>17</sup>. If only 0.1% of all private sector businesses are able to provide established support for survivors of domestic abuse, then millions of people are at risk of perpetration and the majority of businesses are at risk of an unsatisfactory workforce.

Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, and particularly given the current economic circumstances, survivors of abuse are slipping through the net. And frustratingly, businesses are having to spend more money on recruitment, training and paying for newcomer mistakes as a result of survivors leaving respected job roles due to ongoing abuse. This cycle benefits no one but the perpetrator of abuse.

*“Victims are so scared due to the system we are in. We are dismissed, not protected, victim-blamed and made to believe we are bad parents if you are one [a parent]. This is why most people stay silent. We need to be able to open up, get support and safely leave without fear of embarrassment, blame, or losing our job because people simply do not get it. There needs to be paid leave, whether that be a serious incident or a minor incident as they can all affect us majorly, especially with our mental health. There should be a safety plan at work for an individual and escape plan if the perpetrator was to turn up, harass and stalk.”*

Jordan, Support Worker

*“We need more funding so we can offer really good clinical supervision and counselling to our staff. As managers, we can’t do it all. We’re trying to do it all, also our job, manage a case load as well. It’s really difficult. Some of them, we just need little changes like we can add into the business support team to double check that we don’t think there is economical abuse when they’re doing payroll. That doesn’t take any money, that’s really simple. It takes a new procedure to double check.”*

Jocelyn, Senior Manager

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-population-estimates-2019/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2019-statistical-release-html>

### 5A Working from home – COVID-19

The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the key role employers play in being a “checkpoint” for survivors. Working from home has been an adjustment for many, but also a detriment to those in abusive relationships.

Some of the interviews revealed a need to facilitate employees going back to the office because of their jobs providing routine and a distraction from home life.

*“I think lockdown and working from home has raised a whole host of other issues because women are perhaps working from home in really unsafe circumstances (...) maybe they need to think about staff working at home who aren’t performing, there may be good reasons why they’re not performing.*

*Quite often, the outside world and the job keeps women going because it gives them a sense of who they are apart from that relationship. Because in that relationship, they’re being told that they are worthless, they’re rubbish and it’s really important that they get a different view on themselves.”*

Cheryl, Nottingham City Councillor

### 5B Statutory policy and procedures

The use of statutory policies and procedures was the overriding theme throughout our research. Some women said they couldn’t remember signing any policies that cover safeguarding, harassment or abuse. We also had a discussion around whether policies were actually read, understood and were known throughout the different businesses.

The policies require clear boundaries that focus on the safety and wellbeing of employees as well as instigating cohesion and productivity. It needs to be understood that these policies are also benefiting UK businesses. In return, their corporate responsibility, retention and output rates alongside work culture and recruitment will increase. It’s the company’s reputation on the line and how their employees are treated is a huge factor for applicants.

Other things to note is the classification of “urgent domestic business” which was said to be useful to some women. “Cloaking” or similar anonymity to sensitive data is also important to include in policies and procedures.

*“Certainly an advance of salary was a really important one for women who had had to flee in the middle of the night with nothing, being able to have their employer pay their wages in advance to tide them over was a really really vital thing. If that could be in statute, under the specific circumstances where a woman has had to flee, she has a right to her salary in advance.*

*Some companies can facilitate a change in hours and others have limitations on that. It needs to be put in the statute about a definition of what is reasonable. And the only people who decide what is reasonable is actually an employment tribunal, which is a really long process. Can take months and months and months and months until it gets to an employment tribunal stage and then it's too late to help people, really.*

*At the moment, the important thing is to get it embedded into company policy, but having it in statute would bolster the opportunity to develop that company policy in certain organisation. A lot of the bigger trade unions recognise employers aren't the issue. It's the non-trade union workplaces where there's major issues.*

Linda, Nottingham City Councillor and British Telecommunications worker

*“Through what I see, local councils make a lot of the decisions on where money goes and what services are available and supported. Which can often mean that they fail in a lot of areas that other councils achieve. So within the guidance and policies for employers I also think there should statutory guidelines for councils to comply with on the support and services available within their district.”*

Georgina, Career's Advisor

### *Training and awareness*

A topic which was hugely frustrating to the survivors we spoke with was the lack of awareness around domestic abuse despite its prevalence in the UK and the rest of the world.

At a bare minimum, businesses should be aware of local specialist organisations and be able to offer signposting information and advice. All workplaces should have training on “spotting the signs” of abuse and it was suggested that trainers should also let survivors speak of their own experiences. In Nottingham, Equation delivers training to local organisations and businesses and the NHS also has volunteers, who are survivors of abuse, talk to medical students about best practice and how to recognise abuse in hospitals.

At our International Women's Day event, "Supporting Survivors at Work", Fiona Bowman spoke of her personal experience of abuse and how her workplace helped her flee from Scotland to London and start a new life. Feedback from the event spoke of how powerful it was to hear Fiona's story and the lasting impact it had on them. Involving survivors in the training process could be a significant tool.

*"DV in the workplace can be very hidden. (...) you need to look out for the signs and I think lots of people won't understand those signs. I've worked in this field for over 20 years and sometimes I don't recognise it.*

*(...) I still think there's a view out there that domestic violence only happens to a certain group of women. I think there's an element of blaming in there too. If we do the work around blame and awareness raising that this could happen to every woman.*

Jocelyn, Senior Manager

Awareness of local Helplines and resources for businesses should also be distributed more frequently. If colleagues or managers are concerned, they should know to call the Helpline for free advice and information. As mentioned earlier in this report, training on approaching survivors and asking questions, but also asking survivors what help or support would be best for them, would be useful.

Campaigns are crucial for spreading awareness, but more funding is needed for specialist third sector organisations to undertake them.

*"I think in some ways it's almost like if you can draw on popular culture (...) maybe that's an opportunity, or where there's really public campaigns that you can then plug into and not make it seem like "a woman's problem". It's not just women's problem, it's everyone's problem (...) We've had a lot of stuff that talks about Black Lives Matter, people start talking about this stuff when it's going on globally (...) then it makes it a safer conversation."*

Antonia, Office Manager

*"[organisations getting involved in the workplace] I think if they were to get in touch with employers, I think it'd be so good to offer that workshops or facilitate in them kind of workshops for awareness, for them to be able to put in practice policies and procedures and showing them safety planning and how to support people. But also getting in touch with survivors at the workplace, giving them support to be able to tell the managers, and just making that relationship a bit more of a friend rather than employer and employee because I think there's that barrier as well (...) there needs to be more support, awareness and understanding.*

Jordan, Support Worker

*"Maybe, ethically and morally, (...) if someone came into work with a black eye I think people would feel differently to someone coming into work and maybe getting shouty in a meeting. There are certain symptoms of stress and abuse that are more palatable than others."*

Sara-Louise, Self-Employed Personal Assistant

Domestic abuse in all its nuances, is still very often associated solely with physical abuse. Many people still find the concept of abuse difficult to understand, "why doesn't she just leave?" "Why is she going back to him?" "That wouldn't happen to me." By "palatable", Sara-Louise is suggesting that some people would be more willing and understanding of symptoms of abuse that make people naturally feel sorry or protective (crying or physical signs of abuse) rather than a character change that is more assertive or perceived as negative like increased anger. Therefore, in-depth training that covers all aspects of abuse is important for all members of a business.

*"Managers need to have a good understanding of the breadth of abuse that women and men can face in the home (...). If there's a dip in performance, if there is a dip in concentration, your self-esteem has dipped, then you need to have a sympathetic chat with that person. It's not just a performance issue, it's about finding out about why that's happened. And quite often, that can happen quite suddenly as well."*

Cheryl, Nottingham City Councillor