

Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse

March 2021

Operational Date:

Board Approved:

Review Date: March 2024



Table of Contents:

1. Introduction..... 3

2. Purpose and Aims 3

3. Policy Statement..... 4

4. Scope of Policy..... 4

5. Responsibilities..... 4

 5.1 NIGALA 4

 5.2 Chief Executive 4

 5.3 Director of Human Resources and Corporate Services 5

 5.4 Managers..... 5

 5.5 Employees 6

 5.6 Occupational Health 7

 5.7 Trade Union Representative..... 7

6. Supporting Staff..... 7

7. Legislative Compliance, Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance..... 8

8. Perpetrators who are Employees 8

9. Equality and Human Rights Considerations..... 9

10. Information, Advice and Support 9

Appendix A **Error! Bookmark not defined.**2

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) is committed to raising awareness of domestic abuse and offering advice and support for employees and management. Domestic violence and abuse is commonly recognised as a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the use of coercive control and the misuse of power by one person over another. The behaviour is usually recurrent and persistent and is used to punish, harm or frighten the victim.

Definition of Domestic Abuse:

‘Intimidating, manipulating, coercive behaviour, aggression or abuse (physical, psychological, verbal, sexual, emotional or financial) imposed on any individual, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion or disability by a present former intimate partner or family member.’

According to NHS Employers (2019):

- (i) 58% of abused women miss at least three days of work a month
- (ii) 56% of abused women arrive late for work at least five times
- (iii) 16% of men are affected by domestic violence during their adult lifetime

2. Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to signal a clear commitment of the NIGALA’s support to any member of staff affected by domestic abuse.

The policy aims to:

- Raise awareness and identify the impact of domestic abuse on employees;
- Have a framework in place to offer support to employees in addressing problems arising from domestic abuse;
- Maximise the safety of our employees;
- Assist and support employees experiencing domestic abuse;
- Deal effectively with perpetrators of domestic abuse among our workforce as appropriate;

- Aid managers in seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse.

3. Policy Statement

The NIGALA recognises that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise and discuss the issue with their Line Manager and/or Human Resources Directorate, in the knowledge that the matter will be dealt with in a sensitive, non-judgemental, confidential and effective manner.

The NIGALA considers domestic abuse as a serious and widespread issue and recognises the serious impact it can have on the victims. It is socially harmful and unsettling; it can have a negative effect on an individual's work performance, impact on the safety and welfare of all employees, and can in due course affect the NIGALA's service provision. There is a commitment to sensitively and proficiently assist and support individuals and to also liaise with criminal justice bodies in taking action against the perpetrators of domestic abuse.

4. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to ALL employees of the NIGALA, in addition to agency workers, interns, student placements and volunteers.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 NIGALA

The role of the NIGALA is to take corporate responsibility for the overall strategic government of the NIGALA and for ensuring the organisation is able to deliver on the implementation of this policy.

5.2 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has the responsibility for ensuring that there is an appropriate structure for the monitoring and review of arrangements to support staff experiencing domestic abuse.

5.3 Head of Corporate Services

The Head of Corporate Services will provide collective leadership, guidance and management of this policy and its implementation. They will ensure that:

The most recent information is accessible to all employees about domestic abuse and the help and support available to address it.

Training is provided for fundamental staff members, predominately managers and HRCS employees about the policy and related procedures to certify that any employee who reports an incident of domestic abuse is given a thoughtful, non-judgemental and knowledgeable response and support plan.

5.4 Managers

Line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the Policy and Guide
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the Policy and how to access support
- Being mindful of physical, behavioural change and/ or performance changes that may be the consequence of domestic abuse
- Discussing matters in confidence with the employee and advising on any support that may be available to the employee both inside and outside the workplace as outlined in the Guide
- Arranging any support measures that have been agreed with the employee
- Dealing with the perpetrators of domestic abuse appropriately

Managers should understand how challenging it may be for an employee to discuss their personal circumstances and should always offer support in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner. They must consider that signs of abuse will often not be visible and that an individual may leave their abusive situation only to return again sometime in the future.

Where a manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should:

- Contact their Human Resources Directorate for guidance before any discussion takes place with the employee
- Ensure that any discussion about the employee's position, or with the employee, takes place in a secluded area and confidentiality is respected.
- Manage the situation with care and sensitivity. Employees should never feel pressured into disclosing personal information that they do not wish to share. Be mindful that the employee may need some time to decide what to do.
- Be mindful that the employee may not wish to disclose any details with their line manager and may want to involve a third party, for instance, a trade union representative, colleague or an individual from an outside organisation

5.5 Employees

Employees who are experiencing domestic abuse are encouraged to:

- Converse with their line manager about their situation and how the NIGALA could assist
- Access the support and guidance available from the Domestic Violence Helpline and the Inspire Workplaces Employee Assistance Programme
- Agree with their line manager, where appropriate, what to communicate to colleagues and how they should respond if the perpetrator calls or visits the workplace
- Should the NIGALA need to make contact for any reason, ensure their emergency contacts and next of kin details are up to date with their line manager

All employees are responsible for:

Familiarising themselves with the contents of the Policy and Guide on Domestic Abuse

Providing appropriate aid to colleagues within the provisions of this Policy and Guide

Upholding confidentiality

5.6 Occupational Health

Occupational Health is responsible for:

- Providing confidential care to employees experiencing domestic abuse
- Offering support to managers to deal with the work concerns and associated support

5.7 Trade Union Representative

Trade Union Side representatives have a duty to support and direct their members. They will urge staff members to seek help and support regarding domestic abuse matters.

6. Supporting Staff

Special arrangements can be put in place for an employee experiencing domestic violence and abuse, for example:

- **Special Leave:** The NIGALA may allow for special paid leave, including extended leave if the employee requires moving away or going to a refuge, to give employees time to visit their solicitor, their GP etc.
- **Performance and Productivity:** Victims of domestic violence may have performance or productivity issues and the NIGALA should deal with these compassionately.
- **Security measures:** ensuring admittance to some buildings is for staff only and authorised visitors who should be given a badge.
- **Workplace changes:** If practical consideration of a permanent or temporary change of place of work.
- **Shift changes:** If practical, a consideration of changes to shift patterns and hours.
- **Transport:** Consideration of support with transport arrangements to and from work if necessary
- **Safety at Work Plan:** Drawing up a 'Safety at Work Plan' with information about what to do if the abuser calls or comes to the workplace and how to record the employee's whereabouts during the day
- Referral to occupational health if necessary

7. Legislative Compliance, Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance

The NIGALA is mindful of their duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 to ensure to the extent that is practicable, the Health and Safety at work of employees. Under the Management of Health and Safety at work regulations (NI) 1992, the NIGALA acknowledges their responsibility to evaluate the risks of violence to employees and make adjustments for their health and safety by effective planning, management and control.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Conflict, Bullying and Harassment
- Flexible Working Arrangements

8. Perpetrators who are Employees

The NIGALA will:

- Take formal action against any employee who incurs, during their period of employment, a criminal conviction relating to domestic violence and abuse.
- Take disciplinary action against any employee who uses the time, property or the resources of the organisation to abuse a partner or family member.
- Require an employee who has a Non-Molestation Order or Occupation Order in place against them to declare this to the organisation. If their job involves working with or coming into contact with children or vulnerable adults a change in role may be considered.
- Take action, as appropriate, to minimise the potential for a perpetrator to use their position or resources to find out the whereabouts, or other details, of their partner or ex-partner.
- If a colleague is found to be intentionally supporting an abuser in perpetrating abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as mobiles or email, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

Support for the Perpetrators:

Support will be given to staff who are the perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse who may wish to seek help and support to change, for example information will be provided about perpetrator re-education programmes to assist reform the individual and help from the appropriate source. NIGALA will attempt to protect the perpetrator

9. Equality and Human Rights Considerations

The Policy has been screened for equality implications as expected by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance declares that the aim of screening is to recognise those policies which are likely to have a significant influence on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be dedicated to these.

Using the Equality Commission's screening standards no significant equality implications have been recognised. The policy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Similarly, this policy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

The equality screening has been published and can be accessed here [Equality Screening](#).

10. Information, Advice and Support

Nexus NI: Nexus NI has 35 years' experience providing a proficient specialised counselling service to survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape. Counselling provides a safe and confidential place to speak about your life and your feelings. Nexus NI offers counselling sessions through its Enniskillen office as well as managing numerous education programmes in the area.

In 2019 a three-year contract was awarded to Nexus NI to provide and manage a 24-hour Helpline for victims of Domestic and Sexual Abuse. The Helpline is usually the first step victims have taken in getting support which recorded over 4,300 calls to Helpline in the first 3 months. The Helpline is a free and confidential service in which people can get in touch by calling 0808 802 1414, emailing help@dsahelpline.org or by visiting <https://dsahelpline.org>

Victim Support NI: Staff and volunteers are trained to listen, give information and offer feedback. They can help you make sense of what you have been through, discuss your options and help you to feel like you're getting back on track. Victim Support NI is frequently asked by the media to provide 'case studies' to explain the impact of crime on individuals and to explain the wider issues around one particular crime. They do so only if they get receive consent from the individuals involved.

Women's Aid: Women's Aid is a lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic and sexual violence and providing services for women and children. Women's Aid exists to challenge attitudes and beliefs which perpetuate domestic violence. They seek through their work to promote healthy and non-abusive relationships.

What they do:

- Provide refuge accommodation to women and their children suffering mental, physical or sexual abuse within the home
- Run the 24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline
- Advise and support agencies in the development of domestic violence policies, protocols and service delivery
- Provide a range of support provisions to enable women who are leaving a violent position to reconstruct their lives and the lives of their children.

PSNI: Incidents of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland are the highest they have been in 14 years. The PSNI has a positive policy of action against perpetrators of domestic abuse. On arrival at domestic incident, the officer will conduct an investigation. This will include recording a 'witness statement' from you at the time. Domestic Abuse Officers are available across Northern Ireland and are specifically trained to investigate incidents of this type and to support victims of domestic abuse.

What they do:

- They are there to help. They will investigate and take action where there is sufficient evidence
- They will protect you and others from immediate or future harm
- They will give you information about criminal proceedings and how they will handle the situation
- They have dedicated Public Protection Officers in the local area.

Further resources outlined in [Appendix A](#).

Appendix A: Resources Available for Victims of Domestic Abuse

Group	Address and Contact	Website Address
Nexus NI	Tel: 0808 802 1414	24/7 Support for victims of Domestic & Sexual Abuse - DSA Helpline
Victim Support NI	Belfast Hub 2 nd Floor Albany House 73-75 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7AF Tel: 02890 243133	Victim Support Northern Ireland (victimsupportni.com)
Women's Aid	Women's Aid Federation NI 129 University Street Belfast BT7 1HP Tel: 02890249041	Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (womensaidni.org)
PSNI	Call 999 in an emergency where you need immediate assistance or feel threatened. Call 101 in a non-emergency where you need assistance or advice	Police Service of Northern Ireland (nidirect.gov.uk)
PIPS	279-281 Antrim Road Belfast BT15 2GZ Local Tel: 028 9080 5850 Free Tel: 0800 0886042	PIPS Charity – Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm
Simon Community (Homelessness)	25-27 Franklin Street Belfast BT2 8DS Tel: 0800 171 2222	Northern Ireland's Leading Homeless Charity Simon Community NI

Group	Address and Contact	Website Address
Parenting NI	028 9031 0891 Parents Helpline: 0808 8010 722	Parenting NI
ChildLine – NSPCC	Tel: 0800 1111	Childline NSPCC
Samaritans	5 Wellesley Avenue Belfast BT9 6DG Local: 028 9066 4422 Free: 116 123	Samaritans Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy Here to listen
BSO Occupational Health Department	2 nd Floor McKinney House Musgrave Park Hospital Stockman’s Lane Belfast Tel: 028 95040401	Email: occupationalhealth@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Rainbow Project	Belfast LGBT Centre 1 st Floor 23-31 Waring Street Belfast BT1 2DX Tel: 028 9031 9030	Rainbow Project (rainbow-project.org)
Men’s Advisory Project	5 th Floor Glendinning House 6 Murray Street Belfast BT1 6DN Tel: 028 9024 1929	MAP NI - The Mens Advisory Project Northern Ireland