

For Professionals

Recognising the signs · Responding with compassion · Creating safer outcomes

A free guide from Empowered Insights · empoweredinsights.co.uk · If you are in immediate danger call 999 · National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

You don't need to be a domestic abuse specialist to make a difference. Often, feeling seen, heard and believed can be the first step towards someone finding safety and support. At Empowered Insights, we believe that every professional has a role to play in recognising abuse, responding with compassion and helping people access the right support.

Recognising the signs

Domestic abuse is not always visible. Many people experiencing abuse continue to attend work, school or appointments while hiding what is happening behind closed doors. Some signs may include:

- Changes in behaviour, confidence or mood.
- Frequent cancellations or unexplained absences.
- Anxiety about receiving calls or messages.
- A partner who is overly involved or controlling communication.
- Financial difficulties or loss of independence.
- Signs of isolation from friends, family or colleagues.
- Injuries with explanations that don't seem consistent.
- Reluctance to speak openly when another person is present.

While none of these signs alone confirm abuse, they may indicate that someone needs support.

Responding in a trauma-informed way

If someone chooses to disclose abuse, your response matters. A trauma-informed approach means recognising that trauma can affect how people think, communicate and make decisions. When responding:

- Listen without judgement.
- Believe what they are telling you.
- Thank them for trusting you.
- Avoid asking why they stayed or why they didn't leave.
- Respect their choices and their pace.
- Focus on what they need rather than what you think they should do.
- Prioritise their safety and confidentiality wherever possible.

Your role is not to investigate or rescue someone. Your role is to provide a safe, supportive response and help them understand the options available.

Improving referral pathways

No organisation can do this work alone. Having clear referral pathways helps ensure people receive the specialist support they need at the right time. Professionals should be familiar with:

- Local domestic abuse services.
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), where available.
- Safeguarding procedures.
- Emergency response procedures.
- National helplines and specialist support organisations.
- Internal workplace or organisational policies relating to domestic abuse.

Building strong partnerships between organisations creates safer, more coordinated support for those experiencing abuse.

Creating safer workplaces

Domestic abuse is not just a personal issue. It is a workplace issue.

Many people experiencing abuse continue to attend work while managing fear, trauma, financial control, harassment or stalking outside (and sometimes inside) the workplace. For some, work may be the only place they have access to support or a trusted colleague. Employers can make a significant difference by creating a culture where employees feel safe to seek help.

A workplace domestic abuse policy demonstrates an organisation's commitment to employee wellbeing and provides managers with clear guidance. A good policy should include:

- A clear statement recognising domestic abuse as a workplace issue.
- Guidance for managers on recognising the signs and responding appropriately.
- Confidentiality and safeguarding procedures.
- Information about internal and external sources of support.
- Flexible workplace adjustments where appropriate, such as changes to working hours, work locations or contact details.
- Clear referral pathways to specialist domestic abuse services.
- Training for managers and employees to increase awareness and confidence.

Developing a domestic abuse policy is about more than compliance. It's about creating a compassionate workplace where employees know they will be supported if they need help. Government guidance encourages employers to work with staff and specialist domestic abuse organisations when developing and maintaining these policies.

Building safer communities together

Creating meaningful change starts with education. When professionals understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, coercive control and trauma, they are better equipped to recognise concerns early, respond with confidence and help people access support before situations escalate.

Through trauma-informed training, awareness workshops and practical guidance, we help organisations build the confidence to recognise domestic abuse, respond with compassion and develop policies that support employees, strengthen safeguarding and create healthier workplace cultures.