TACKLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE
Our aim is to build a culture of inclusion and wellbeing.

We believe all are entitled to a workplace which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. This should also extend to home life as this supports colleagues in achieving their full potential, creating an inclusive culture in which all individuals feel able to be the best version of themselves.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), reports from across the world, suggest a significant increase in domestic violence cases related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic resulted in ‘lockdowns’ and ‘stay-at-home’ orders that were implemented in many markets globally, increasing the vulnerability of all individuals to experiencing violence and abuse, in addition to increasing the possibility of others perpetrating acts of violence and abuse.

Standard Chartered have developed this toolkit to provide examples of the various support mechanisms that organisations can consider when supporting individuals experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse and the range of resources available.

INTRODUCTION

CONTENT

DEFINITIONS

Domestic Violence and Abuse is defined as a pattern of behaviour at home or in a domestic setting, that is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. This can include:

- Acts of physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Controlling behaviours
- Financial abuse
- Emotional (psychological) abuse

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The term ‘domestic violence’ is used in many countries to refer to partner violence but the term can also encompass child or elder abuse, or abuse by any member of a household. According to recent studies:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE DATA

Globally there has been a significant increase in domestic violence and abuse cases since COVID 19*:

*https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/
DEBUNKING MYTHS

Socio-economic background

Myth:
Domestic violence and abuse takes place in families from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Fact

Marital status

Myth:
Domestic violence and abuse only happens between spouses and partners.

Fact

Psychoactive substances

Myth:
Domestic violence is due to influence of alcohol/drugs or stress

Fact

Gender

Myth:
Men do not experience domestic violence and abuse.

Fact

Mindset

Myth:
Perpetrators of domestic violence cannot change their mindset and behaviour.

Fact

Privacy

Myth:
Domestic violence is a private matter and no employer should get involved.

Fact
How Domestic Violence can appear at work

*Note: These are just possible signs, be mindful about making assumptions

Colleagues subjected to domestic violence may:

- Show up late or leave early
- Exhibit signs of stress, anxiety, and depression
- Be unable to concentrate at work
- Show signs of decreased productivity
- Show visible physical injuries
- Be scared to reveal anything related to their personal lives and so may show signs of concern when such conversations come up
- Have unexplained injuries or physical pain

The workplace is an important place where support can be made available to those experiencing domestic violence.

In order to do so, it is key to build healthy, inclusive and supportive workplaces where all colleagues feel comfortable to seek help.

Support can include

- Access to counselling through employee assistance programmes (EAP) or other local providers
- Appropriate paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing of childcare, to recover from health-related impact and/or for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- Promptly addressing concerns related to potential contact with perpetrators in the workplace
- Redeployment or relocation
- Enhanced financial support (i.e. advance in pay)
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- Diverting emails away from the abuser
- Using other existing policies (including flexible working) to support the colleague’s needs

A Guide for Organisations

Experiencing domestic violence and abuse can leave colleagues traumatised, distressed and in some cases, fearing for their safety. Due to the difficulties in discussing such personal issues, many colleagues may either be hesitant to ask for help from their People Leader or anyone else.

Consider whether a conversation with the colleague/team member would be appropriate.
A four-step guide to opening the conversation

When individuals are hesitant ask for help, organisations can consider:

- Talking to the colleague and letting them know your observations and the available support, and
- Reassuring them that you will treat whatever they tell you sensitively and that you are willing to support them whenever they feel ready to talk.

Below are some examples of questions and prompts that could be used:

**How are you doing at the moment?**

Your wellbeing is important to me and I’ve noticed that you seem distracted/upset at the moment – are you ok?

If there’s anything you like to talk to me about I’m always here to support you at any time.

**Is everything all right at home?**

Are there any problems at home that might be contributing towards your sickness absence/that might be causing the [uncharacteristic] drop in your performance that I’ve noticed lately? Please let me know if there’s anything I can do to help.

You don’t have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready.

**What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How?**

If there is something going on and you don’t feel ready to speak to me that’s okay, you can speak to someone in HR or the Employee Assistance Programme (if you have one).

**Approach with respect**

Listen to the colleague with your full attention without making judgments based on your own experiences or perceptions of the situation.

Avoid language that indicates blame/fault- “Why don’t you leave?” or “How can you let this happen?” or “Why haven’t you told anyone before?”

Let the colleague speak openly about the situation. This may take time, so it is important to remove any other distractions and ensure you are in an appropriately private setting (if you are both working remotely, the colleague might prefer to leave their place of residence to hold the conversation).

Let the colleague disclose their situation at their own pace if they chose to share it with you.

**Acknowledge the courage** it takes to talk about domestic violence.

**Maintain confidentiality and privacy**

- **Take immediate action**

  Where there is a significant cause for concern, discuss with your colleague what immediate action is required, this may include:
  - Contacting your HR
  - Promptly addressing concerns related to potential contact with perpetrators in the workplace
  - Talking to Security to get the name of the alleged perpetrator logged at entry and put on a blacklist
  - Emergency loans and financial support
  - Emergency leave / “safe leave”

- **Stay Connected**

  Agree communication channels - e.g. text may be the preferred method rather than phone calls.

  Agree regular ‘check in’ dates/times

- **Provide Ongoing Support**

  Access to counselling through local providers

  Appropriate paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing of childcare, to recover from health-related impact and/or for court appointments.
Support available

For anyone requiring additional individual support, please see the Directory of Domestic Violence Agencies. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

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Support available

For anyone requiring additional individual support, please see the International Directory of Domestic Violence Agencies globally.

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