

UNITE MODEL POLICY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

These are the Unite priorities for a domestic violence and abuse policy. Each workplace will be different, and it is essential that the policy you negotiate is tailored to the work arrangements in place, what is relevant to a call centre will in some aspects be different to a bus garage or hospital. Contact your Regional Women's & Equalities Officer if you need support in negotiating a domestic violence and abuse policy and remember to email the finalised policy to equalities@unitetheunion.org.

A NEGOTIATED POLICY

The employer has a duty to provide all staff with a safe and healthy working environment including protecting them from the risk of violent attacks and providing support to any employee who is or has experienced domestic violence and abuse.

The employer acknowledges that domestic violence and abuse is a significant problem which has a devastating impact on mental and physical health of those experiencing it.

The employer will not tolerate the appalling act of domestic violence and abuse and ensures all staff adhere to the standards of professional and respectful behaviour.

The employer makes a commitment to take all reasonable steps possible to tackle the effects of domestic violence and abuse and to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.

The employer ensures all cases are treated sympathetically, positively and effectively.

The employer ensures that those experiencing domestic violence and abuse are aware of the support that is available within the organisation.

The employer provides guidance to line managers when supporting staff who are affected by domestic violence and abuse.

The employer will ensure those experiencing domestic violence and abuse are not disadvantaged within the terms and conditions of their employment and that all reasonable steps are taken to offer support, flexibility and workplace adjustments to those experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

The employer will take the following steps to counter the effects of domestic violence and abuse.

CONFIDENTIALLY AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The employer will undertake to ensure the following measures to further protect the employee who is or has experienced domestic violence and abuse:

1. Ensure the information provided by the employee is treated with strict confidentiality and that it will not be shared with other members of staff without their expressed permission.
2. Personal details of the employee for example, addresses, telephone numbers, work locations and shift times, is kept strictly confidential.
3. In case of an LGBT+ employee disclosing domestic violence and abuse issue, due regard will be paid to the double disclosure of confidential information if the employee is not “out” at work.
4. In circumstances where confidentiality cannot be assured ie. when there are concerns regarding children, vulnerable adults or where the organisation is required to protect the safety of staff, the employer will discuss with the employee the reasons why confidentiality needs to be breached and will seek the employee’s agreement where possible. Nevertheless, as far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
5. All records concerning domestic violence and abuse will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to domestic violence and abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of the employee experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
6. Any improper disclosure of information - breaches of confidentiality - by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Disclosure of Abuse

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or a colleague. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse but offer information, workplace support, and signpost to other organisations.

A member of human resources trained in domestic abuse issues, will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff. This person will also provide guidance for line managers who are approached by staff who are being abused.

ACTION TAKEN

The employer will offer employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to the following.

1. Prioritising safety of the employee.
2. Ensuring the effects of domestic violence and abuse on work is recognised and that the employee experiencing domestic violence and abuse will be believed and treated sympathetically and flexibly.
3. Developing an individualised personal and workplace safety plan to address the situation of the worker and other employees. Updating the plans as circumstances change. Sharing the plans with anyone who needs to know about the situation in order to ensure safety.
4. Encouraging the employee to contact a specialist support agency or suitably trained specialist member of staff who can carry out a risk assessment and make appropriate referrals where necessary.
5. Allowing the employee to decide the course of action taken throughout.
6. Making a commitment that time-keeping problems and increased sickness, caused by domestic violence and abuse, will not affect the employee's work record.

Paid Leave

1. Making a commitment to flexible paid leave.
2. Granting at least two weeks' paid leave for those experiencing domestic violence and abuse enabling them to organise practical and legal problems.
3. Providing extended paid leave when requested.
4. Offering phased returns.
5. Providing paid leave to attend appointments e.g. for legal, housing, medical or childcare issues, or for professional counselling.

Safety in the workplace

1. Redeploying to a different site/department or a non-frontline job, if possible and if the employee wishes.
2. Providing a secure workplace and ensure reception and other relevant staff have appropriate domestic violence and abuse training.

3. Providing safe places for respite in the workplace.
4. Implementing other security measures for example, changing entry codes if the employee is being harassed by abuser.
5. In case of the couple working together, taking responsibility for and have in place a procedure to ensure that they or individual employees are not used as actors in the abuse.
6. Ensuring prompt use of the harassment procedure if violence and abuse takes place at work.
7. Report workplace domestic violence and abuse incidents to RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).

Flexible working arrangement

1. Providing flexible working when requested including temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
2. Not requiring the employee to work overtime without sufficient notice.

Practical Support

1. Enabling the employee to move away from the area and offer financial support and hardship funds.
2. Issuing salary advances in cash or to an alternative bank account provided by the employee.
3. Providing emergency assistance programme and arrange and pay for a temporary place of safety for example, a hotel.
4. Offering practical support for example, letting the employee make calls from work, change their telephone number or email address.
5. Covering the cost where there is a legal route to resolve the case.
6. Providing access to courses developed to support survivors of domestic violence and abuse in paid time.
7. Establishing a support network of managers, members of human resources team and Unite representatives for example through the Employee Assistance Programme. Providing enhanced training for these named staff to offer listening and guidance (though not formal counselling) support and assistance to employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
8. Providing access to counselling and support services in paid time.

9. Supporting employees who are assisting a close friend or relative who is experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Training and Raising Awareness

1. Training all staff including those on agency contracts, freelancers and zero-hours contracts, to recognise the warning signs and risk factors of domestic violence and abuse and how to report it. This training will be developed with specialist services and Unite representatives, to ensure their first response to survivor employees is safe and appropriate.
2. Raising awareness about domestic violence and abuse.
3. Publicising this policy and relevant contacts through for example, newsletters, notice boards and the intranet.
4. Briefing managers and Unite representatives on the contents of this policy and provide appropriate training on its implementation.
5. Providing information on domestic violence and abuse support services, the workplace policy, the role of the named contacts, and protocols for identifying and responding to domestic abuse (victims and perpetrators) to all staff as part of induction, health & safety, and management training.
6. Promoting a 'zero tolerance' culture. 'Jokes' about domestic violence and abuse is not acceptable in the workplace.