

Domestic Abuse and COVID-19

Since the first national lockdown, domestic abuse cases have risen significantly. The national domestic abuse charity, Women's Aid, found that 61% of survivors have experienced more abuse during the pandemic and the National Domestic Abuse Helpline reported a 25% increase in calls since lockdown measures began.

This increase in domestic abuse cases has exposed the vital need for enhanced protective and preventive services.

ISC Domestic Abuse Working Group

Recognising the increase in the numbers affected by domestic abuse, The Insurance Supper Club has formed a Domestic Abuse Working Group with the objective of supporting four charities who work with victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking.

Domestic abuse takes a number of forms, ranging from physical violence to coercive control. Each of the charities works in an area where support is vital, assisting with immediate issues facing survivors who may have had to leave their homes and possibly their children through to finding employment to ensure trafficking survivors do not get drawn back into trafficking gangs.

The awareness programmes these charities provide ranges from training call centre staff to recognise the signs of financial coercive control during a telephone discussion and enabling them to support a victim to training repairs and maintenance employees to spot the signs of physical domestic abuse when attending homes. (DAHA accreditation).

What businesses can do to help

1. Financial Support

All four charities require funding to enable them to continue their vital work. We ask that companies who have implemented Corporate Social Responsibility programmes offer financial support to any one of these charities as part of that commitment.

2. Awareness Training

Businesses should take advantage of the training available from domestic abuse charities. This will enable your employees to better understand how to respond to clients and/or colleagues who may be victims.

3. Implement Internal Changes

The Domestic Abuse Act presents an opportunity to provide the resource and thus support survivors needs through one of its stated aims in raising awareness of the issue. To ensure it is truly transformative, businesses must put in place the resources and processes required to identify and support all those suffering as a result of domestic violence, women and men alike.

Paul Scully MP issued an open letter to all employers on the 21st of January this year. The letter outlines several practical steps employers can take to build awareness of domestic abuse, ensuring they are noticing warning signs and helping workers access the support they need - and we recommend that this publication guides the resources and processes that are put in place.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-open-letter-to-employers-on-how-to-help-workers-find-the-right-support>

We need to make a difference. Please join us to make that difference.

The Charities

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA)

Most public services weren't designed with domestic abuse in mind, and they often struggle to keep people safe. Poor communication and gaps between services put survivors at risk. Standing Together aims to end domestic abuse by changing the way that local areas respond to it through an approach they pioneered, called the **Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**.

The Coordinated Community Response brings services together to ensure local systems truly keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account, and prevent domestic abuse. Their model of a coordinated local partnership to tackle and ultimately prevent domestic abuse is now widely accepted as best practice.

STADA also deliver training to a range of professionals including criminal justice partners, police, health professionals, housing associations, MARACs, social services, local authorities and faith groups.

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA)

This is the only UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of economic abuse and transforming responses to it. Many women experience economic abuse within the context of intimate partner violence. It limits their choices and ability to access safety. SEA's vision is a world in which all women and girls achieve economic equality and can live their lives free of abuse and exploitation.

Responses to economic abuse are at an early stage of development in the UK. It is vital that we better understand and address this issue because economic stability is linked to physical safety. Women who experience economic abuse are five times more likely to experience physical abuse than those who don't.

Moreover, when women experience economic abuse in the context of coercive control, they are at increased risk of homicide.

Abusers exploit women's existing economic inequality or create economic instability to reduce their partner's ability to resist control. Without access to the economic resources required to leave and live independently, victims stay with abusers for longer and experience more harm as a result.

The Charities

Employers Initiative Against Domestic Abuse (EIDA)

EIDA are a growing network of large and small businesses. Their mission is to enable employers to take action on domestic abuse – raising awareness among all employees, supporting those facing domestic abuse, and providing access to services to help perpetrators to stop.

When employers demonstrate that they are aware of domestic abuse and make staff aware of the services that are available, this can help to reduce the wall of silence about domestic abuse that prevents many from seeking help.

Many employers are already taking action in their organisations – for example developing policies on domestic abuse, raising awareness amongst employees, training senior staff, managers and ambassadors on how to identify those who may need help, and offering direct help or signposting to where it can be found. The objective is to raise greater awareness, build relationships and share best practice to enable a systematic change to the way domestic abuse is handled in the UK.

The Sophie Hayes Foundation

The Sophie Hayes Foundation was established to provide support and employment for victims of human trafficking and slavery to ensure they retained their freedom through the ability to live and work without fear. Over 12 months they support programme participants to build confidence, self-worth, resilience, skills and tangible outcomes to independence.

Their unique Employability Programme, consists of 2 modules focusing on growth in confidence whilst simultaneously building life changing employability and educational skills. Additionally, all survivors have access to their Survivor Network, for ongoing peer to peer support, companionship and further confidence building. To date the Sophie Hayes Foundation has supported hundreds of women to gain valuable life changing employability experiences across a diverse range of sectors: Social Care. The National Health Service. Retail. Finance. Light Industry. Fashion. Hospitality. Community College. University. Volunteering