

Freedom Of Information Act 2000

I am writing to inform you that the Department has now completed its search for the information requested in your email of 2 August 2007. I have responded to your request in the order in which you asked for information.

Requests 1, 2 & 3

The Northern Ireland Civil Service's (NICS) guidance on Domestic Violence and Abuse was formally issued by Central Personnel Group (CPG) in February 2006 and applies to all NICS officers, and I have attached an electronic copy of the policy for your information. The guidance has not been amended since its introduction.

Requests 4 & 5

Also attached is a copy of the NICS Staff Handbook Amendment Notice 3/06 which CPG issued to all departments for circulation to all NICS officers notifying them of the introduction of this central guidance on domestic violence and abuse. CPG has not issued any further guidance or advice on domestic violence and abuse nor ran any programmes or produced any scripts or manuals in addition to the central guidance.

You may wish to contact the Domestic Violence Unit in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety who may have some relevant information on this issue. The Domestic Violence Unit may be contacted at the following address: Room D3, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SQ.

Request 6 (numbered 4 in your e-mail request)

The NICS's guidance on domestic violence and abuse has no adverse differential impact on any group under its obligations of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

If you consider that the information that we have provided does not fully meet your request please contact me at the number given above in the first instance. You have the right to request a formal review by the Department and if you wish to do so please write to the DFP Information Management Unit, 1st Floor, ISU Building, Rosepark, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3NR.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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Yours sincerely,

21. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence and abuse is a serious problem. It has a devastating impact on victims and their families. Each year in Northern Ireland around 5 people are killed and over 700 families have to be rehoused as a result of violence or abuse in the home. It is likely that every Department and Agency has employees who have been affected by, or are at risk from domestic violence, or who are perpetrators of domestic violence.

This chapter provides advice on how Departments and Agencies should deal with domestic violence situations that might arise.

21.1 WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE?

21.1.1 Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour, which is characterised by the exercise of control and misuse of power by one person over another within an intimate relationship or a family. It is usually frequent and persistent. It knows no boundaries as regards age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography, but in the majority of reported cases women are the victims. It has wide adverse effects on children.

21.1.2 Domestic violence and abuse means: **“threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation”**.

21.2 THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE WORKPLACE

21.2.1 Home and work issues cannot always be separated and domestic violence can impact greatly on the working life of someone who is being abused. Domestic violence can result in deterioration in performance, increased absenteeism or poor timekeeping, threatening job prospects and poor timekeeping and job security. People experiencing domestic violence are especially vulnerable once they attempt to leave abusive partners and may become vulnerable going to or coming from work, or while they are at work as the abuser knows where they can be located. This can give rise to health and safety issues and an increased risk of workplace violence.

21.2.2 By having policies in place to assist those experiencing domestic violence, it is possible to create a safe and supportive environment where the workplace can become a place of safety. A policy that supports employees experiencing domestic violence is also of benefit to the employer, helping them to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the workforce and increase productivity.

21.3 THE NICS POSITION

21.3.1 The NICS:

- is committed to the principle that domestic violence and abuse is unacceptable behaviour and that everyone has a right to live free from fear and abuse;
- will provide details of the first point of contact for employees who need to discuss issues around domestic violence;
- is committed to creating a supportive environment and to providing confidential mechanisms for those experiencing domestic violence to seek help and information;
- is committed to offering ongoing support to those experiencing domestic violence;
- is also committed to raising awareness on domestic violence issues; including provision of resources, posters and information on domestic violence available in the workplace;
- will review the effectiveness of the guidance and regularly update information on help available and how to contact support services.

21.4 IDENTIFYING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

21.4.1 Individuals experiencing domestic violence can suffer a broad range of physical and emotional consequences. Possible signs of domestic violence might include:

- poor attendance record;
- uncharacteristic depression, anxiety, distraction or problems with concentration;
- unexplained poor quality of work performance;
- the receipt of repeated upsetting calls/faxes/e-mails, or the individual being a victim of vandalism or threats;
- obsession with time;
- needing regular time off for appointments;
- repeated injuries, or unexplained bruising or explanations that do not fit the injuries displayed; or

- increased hours being worked for no apparent reason.

21.5 THE ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS AND THE WELFARE SERVICE

21.5.1 Individual line managers can, in consultation with Welfare Service, play a key role in supporting staff who are being subjected to or have been victims of domestic violence. Managers should make a managerial, rather than a **personal** commitment, to help a member of staff resolve any issue when they are asked for assistance. This reduces the potential for confusion arising about the line manager's role and can reduce the potential for complications or blurring of responsibilities for both manager and individual. Advice on such matters should normally be sought from either with the appropriate Personnel Officer or Welfare Officer.

21.5.2 Any discussion about the employee's situation should take place in private and any questions should be asked with care and sensitivity, reinforcing that, subject to the provisions of the law, confidentiality would be respected. However, employees should not be pressured into disclosing any personal information that they do not feel comfortable disclosing. If domestic violence is disclosed, line managers need to recognise that the employee will need specialist help and they should refer the individual to the Employee Assistance Programme and/or Welfare Service for further advice.

21.6 HELP AND SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

21.6.1 An individual experiencing domestic violence should be made aware that there is help available. If the individual does not feel comfortable talking to a line manager, then they should be referred to the Department's Welfare Officer or Personnel Branch, who can provide information on organisations which can offer advice and support. If appropriate, line managers may introduce limited workplace measures to assist the employee, for example in the interim giving some leeway regarding coretime.

21.6.2 Although managers will try to provide as much support as possible to the individual experiencing domestic violence, the employee also needs to be reminded of what is expected with regard to performance and attendance when he/she is at work. Managers should keep records of discussions, as appropriate.

21.6.3 Trade Union Side will offer help and support to staff experiencing domestic violence.

21.7 SUPPORT SERVICES

21.7.1 Anyone who feels in immediate danger should dial 999.

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Domestic Violence Officers 028 9065 0222
(Ask to speak to the local Domestic Violence Officer)

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is the lead voluntary organisation challenging domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Its main aim is to create a safe and supportive society for women, children and young people affected by domestic violence.

Freephone Helpline

24 hour Domestic Violence Helpline 0800 9171414

Local Women's Aid Helplines

Ballymena	028 2563 2136
Belfast	028 9066 6049
Coleraine	028 7032 1263
Cookstown and Dungannon	028 8676 9300
Craigavon	028 3834 3256
Fermanagh	028 6632 8898
Foyle	028 7128 0060
Newry	028 3025 0765
North Down and Ards	028 9127 3196
Omagh	028 8224 1414

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Helplines

Cara Friend - Gay Helpline	028 9032 2023
- Lesbian Helpline	028 9023 8668
Rainbow Project	028 9031 9030
Belfast Butterfly Club	078 8543 0408

Other Useful Numbers

Men's Advisory Project (MAP) 028 9024 1929

This organisation provides a service to male victims of domestic violence and abuse and also offers counselling to men on anger management.

Men to Men	028 9023 7779
Rape Crisis Centre	028 9024 9696
Nexus	028 9032 6803
Victim Support	028 9024 4039
Disability Action	028 9029 7880
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities	028 9023 8645

Citizen's Advice Bureau	028 9023 1120
Law Society (Legal and Local Solicitor Advice)	028 9023 0696
Opportunity Now	029 2043 6912
Relate	028 9032 3454
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90
Parent's Advice Centre	028 9023 8800
Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission	028 9024 6441

Trade Unions

NIPSA

Harkin House
54 Wellington Park
BELFAST
BT9 6DP

Telephone: 028 9066 1831
Fax: 028 9066 5847

UCATT

Rooms 108/110
Midland Building
Whitla Street
BELFAST
BT15 1JP

Telephone: 028 9075 1866
Fax: 028 9075 1867

AMICUS

26 – 34 Antrim Road
BELFAST
BT15 2AA

Telephone: 028 9074 7871
Fax: 028 9074 8052

GMB

3 – 4 Donegall Quay
BELFAST
BT1 3EA

Telephone: 028 9031 2111
Fax: 028 9031 2333

ATGWU

Transport House
102 High Street
BELFAST
BT1 2DL

Telephone: 028 9023 2381
Fax: 028 9024 0133

NICS STAFF HANDBOOK

REVISION OF: Part – General Employment issues

Chapter 21: Domestic Violence and Abuse

STATEMENT OF CHANGES

1. This Amendment:
 - (a) provides advice on how Departments and Agencies should deal with domestic violence situations that may arise; and
 - (b) Makes staff aware of the various sources of support.

ACTION

2. All staff should be told that this amendment has now been issued.

This amendment can be located on the internet version of the NICS Staff Handbook at:

<http://www.nics.gov.uk/pay/handbook/index.html>

CONTACTS

3. The contacts points **for Establishment/Personnel Branches only** are:-
 - a. **Content** – Carol Bell (ext. 83361) / Deirdre Mooney (ext. 83360), Employment Conditions and Initiatives Branch (ECIB), Department of Finance and Personnel.
 - b. **Circulation** – Paul McKinney (ext: 83346), Employment Conditions and Relations Branch (ECRB), Department of Finance and Personnel.

ISSUED BY: Anne McKenna, ECPD, Department of Finance and Personnel

DATE: February 2006