



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network

16 DAYS AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Member Briefing



FOREWARD

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is a global campaign supported by the United Nations to raise awareness and encourage action on gender-based violence. Gender-based violence has many forms including domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage and honour-based violence.

In the context of the UK the most common form of gender-based violence is domestic abuse and the statistics are sadly stagnant and depressing. One in four women and one in six men suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime and domestic abuse costs businesses £1.9 billion every year due to decreased productivity, time off work, lost wages and sick pay. In the UK, nearly 2 million people experienced domestic abuse in the last year alone.

In 2018 Business in the Community worked in partnership with the Insurance Charities, Public Health England and an advisory group of Domestic Abuse specialist agencies to develop a new toolkit to support organisations to take action on domestic abuse through the workplace.

We know from developing the toolkit and talking with businesses of different sizes and in different sectors, how cross-cutting this issue is, but also how challenging it can be for organisations to step into this space and take action.

This briefing builds on the toolkit to support our Members to take action during these 16 Days.

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“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993



THE 16 DAYS OF ACTION

The [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#) is an international United Nations led campaign that takes place each year. It commences on **25 November**, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to **10 December**, Human Rights Day.

It was originated by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organising strategy by individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In support of this civil society initiative the 16 Days of Activism, under the leadership of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign (UNiTE), calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanise advocacy efforts and share of knowledge and innovations.

The UNiTE campaign uses the colour orange to represent a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls, as a unifying theme running through all of its global activities.

Each year there is a cross-cutting theme to the campaign. The first campaign theme in 1991 was entitled *Violence Against Women Violates Human Rights*, and women from around the world came together with the Center for Women's Global Leadership at the first International Women's Leadership Institute.^[4]



The theme for 2018 is [Orange the World: #HearMeToo](#)

Under the theme Orange the World: #HearMeToo, organisations are encouraged to host events with local, national, regional and global women's movements, survivor advocates and women human rights defenders and create opportunities for dialogue between activists, policy-makers and the public. As in previous years, the colour orange will be a key theme unifying all activities, with buildings and landmarks lit and decorated in orange to bring global attention to the initiative.

UNiTE has three core objectives for the campaign in 2018:

- **Amplify the voices of diverse women's movements** across geographic locations and sectors working to prevent and end violence against women.
- **Advocate for specific changes** within institutions and workplaces, including within the UN system, private sector organizations, education institutions, civil society organizations and governments to promote gender equality and end violence against women.
- **Call for specific financing commitments** in national efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.

During the 16 Days there are several specific global days that can be important triggers or hooks for engagement:

- 25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – commencement of 16 Days of Activism.
- 29 November – International Women Human Rights Defender Day.
- 1 December – World AIDS Day.
- 3 December - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 10 December - International Human Rights Day



Summary of the Domestic Violence Toolkit for Employers

The [Domestic Abuse employer toolkit](#) supports organisations to work through a structured approach to responding to domestic abuse. The toolkit was developed with the support of a broad range of domestic violence and abuse specialist organisations and where appropriate signposts and highlights the specialist support that is available to support a business in this journey.

Different organisations are at different stages and the structure of the toolkit allows businesses to start where it is appropriate for them.

The core sections of the toolkit are:

Understanding the Issue

- The business case
- Recognising domestic abuse impact in the workplace
- Legal context for employers
- Myth busting

Taking Action

- Workplace policies and guidance
- Guiding the approach
- Opening the conversation
- Disclosure
- Responding to perpetrators

Resources

by issues and actively signpost through employee support materials and resources.

The 16 Days of Action offer a great opportunity for organisations to take action as part of a global movement to acknowledge the issue of domestic violence and abuse in the context of work and workplaces.

- Resources for employees experiencing domestic abuse
- Resources for employers

Case Studies

- Gentoo Group
- Gowling WLG
- Lloyds Banking Group
- Santander
- The Hampton Trust
- West Midland's Police

The toolkit highlighted three key actions for employers:

ACKNOWLEDGE

Acknowledge as employers there is a responsibility to address domestic violence and enable and encourage colleagues to openly discuss the topic in a supportive and responsive workplace.

RESPOND

Review policies and procedures to ensure that you are providing a supportive workplace and can respond to disclosure and these policies and procedures are implemented correctly and supported through training and education.

REFER

Provide access to organisations who can help employees affected





“My employer did everything they could to help me and protect my identity if my ex-boyfriend ever came looking for me at work. I feel safer at work now that I know my ex-partner can’t easily find me. I am worried that he will come looking for me and my child, but I know my company will continue to support me if this situation arises.”

Julie, receptionist for a national accountancy firm and a female survivor of domestic abuse

Opportunities for Action During the 16 Days Campaign

Responsible business is about being at the heart of healthy communities and domestic abuse threatens this in the most insidious of ways. The 16 Days of Global Action provides a great opportunity for employers to take action on this most challenging of issues in a meaningful way

Action for organisations will reflect where you are on your journey to creating healthy and inclusive workplaces, as responsible businesses.

We know that actions, no-matter how small, can make a real difference to people enduring violence.

Drawing on the toolkit actions, we are highlighting three key opportunities to act in 2018 under the theme of **Acknowledging** domestic abuse in the workplace, by:

- **Creating a conversation in the workplace**
- **Using social media to raise awareness externally in the context of employment**
- **Raising awareness in your public & private spaces**



Creating a conversation in the workplace

One of the most important steps an employer can take is to create a conversation in the workplace about domestic violence and abuse.

People enduring, and perpetrating violence, often feel isolated and unsure who to speak to and how to reach out for help.

There are many different ways of creating a conversation in the workplace. Incorporating articles about the 16 days of global action through internal newsletters or intranet items, internal blogs from senior leaders discussing the issue or through specific staff engagement events or webinars with external speakers.

BITC is hosting a webinar on the [27th November](#) to talk about the role of employers in addressing domestic violence and to raise awareness of the employer toolkit. The webinar is free to join and a great opportunity to support your people to engage in the conversation.

The key action is creating a conversation and alongside the conversation signposting to national, and local, specialist support services and helplines.



Case Study from the DV Employer Toolkit: Gowling WLG

To give employees further access to support, we put posters up on the back of toilet doors, sharing stories of men and women who had experienced a wide range of abuse – from coercion and control to rape. The posters explained that ‘help is closer than you think’, and we provided information about specialist support as well as the option of talking to Practice Operation Managers.

More than a dozen colleagues from across the business have come forward to ask for support as a result of these efforts – from more junior to very senior employees. The posters helped normalise talking about domestic abuse in a supportive environment, and we heard how the information helped employees realise that what was happening to them wasn’t acceptable.



Using your social media presence

As businesses, many of you have a significant social media presence to raise awareness of issues. More and more organisations are using this to demonstrate their responsibility in society to create healthier communities and healthy environments.

Using social media to raise awareness of domestic violence is an important step to changing the landscape of gender-based violence.

You can use social media to amplify existing material and messaging from UNite and other national and international agencies, or you can create your own content.

UNite have created the hashtag **#HearMeToo** to highlight social media action during the 16 days of action.

UNite Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/SayNO.UNiTE>

UNite Twitter Page

https://twitter.com/SayNO_UNiTE

Other UK Agencies which could be good to amplify during the 16 days are:

NO More Campaign

<https://twitter.com/NOMOREorg>

White Ribbon Campaign

https://twitter.com/whiteribbon_uk

The Corporate Alliance

https://twitter.com/caadv_uk

Women's Aid

<https://twitter.com/womensaid>

¹ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/how-common-is-domestic-abuse/>



Example tweets to use

Scale of the issue¹

2 women a week die in England & Wales because of domestic violence #HearMeToo

Over a million women experienced domestic violence in 2017 in the UK #HearMeToo

In the workplace²

Domestic Abuse costs UK business over £1.9 billion a year. Time for all employers to take action. #HearMeToo

Employers can make a real difference in addressing domestic violence. Find out how at <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/toolkits/domestic-abuse-toolkit-employers> #HearMeToo

Signposting

Find out more about Domestic Abuse in Women's Aid's Survivor Handbook #HearMeToo

Experiencing Domestic Abuse? Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) on 0808 2000 247 #HearMeToo

Force Marriage is an important form of gender based abuse. Find out more at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage> #HearMeToo

² <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/toolkits/domestic-abuse-toolkit-employers>



Raise awareness in your public and private spaces

One of the ways in which domestic abuse continues is because people who are enduring violence, or perpetrating it, don't know where to go to get help. Raising awareness of the national and local specialist services can be a really simple yet powerful action to help people find the support they need.

Most organisations will have some form of public space for employees, whether it's the reception lobby, toilets in the building or café's or retail spaces, as well as internal spaces. There are also lots of charities and specialist organisations who provide resources which you can signpost to.

Things you could do in the workplace:

- Internally put up posters and leaflets in communal spaces like toilets and café/kitchen spaces
- Include articles and signposting to services through internal communications

You could also build on this and display the posters and leaflets in public spaces for customers and visitors to see and contribute to raising awareness across society.

Some of the national organisations and campaigns who provide, or sell, posters and leaflets are:

National Domestic Violence Helpline

<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>

White Ribbon Day

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk>

Women's Aid Campaign Resources

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/downloads-and-resources/>

UK NO MORE Campaign

<http://uksaysnomore.org>

Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse

<https://eida.org.uk>

Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence

<http://thecorporatealliance.co.uk>

The [Domestic Abuse toolkit for employers](#) includes links to more resources and specialist organisations.



An estimated
1.9 million adults

aged **16 to 59**
experienced **domestic
abuse** in the last year¹

Abuse is not just about
physical violence – it can also be
emotional, sexual and economic⁴



**Two women are
killed each week**
by a current or
former partner¹

86% of HR leads

agree that employers
have a **duty of care
to provide support**
to employees on the issue
of domestic abuse³

1 in 4 women
and **1 in 6 men**
suffer from domestic
abuse in their lifetime¹

There was an average of
less than one disclosure

to employers* over the previous
12 months, which suggests
**not enough employees
feel supported** to raise
the problem³

Only **5%**
of organisations have a
**specific policy
or guidelines**
on the issue³



62%
of children exposed
to domestic abuse are
directly harmed⁶

The cost of domestic
abuse to business
is estimated at

£1.9 billion a year

due to decreased productivity, time
off work, lost wages and sick pay²



Domestic abuse takes place
at **all levels of society**,
regardless of gender,
social class, race, religion,
sexuality or disability⁵

54% of employers said that it
caused the quality of an

employee's work to suffer

and **56%** said it led to
absenteeism³

*within medium and large organisations



Royal Founding Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales
Chairman: Jeremy Darroch
Chief Executive: Amanda Mackenzie OBE

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