

## ECONOMIC COST OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While the emotional and psychological cost of domestic and gender-based violence is devastating, there are also significant economic costs associated with this crime.

Research conducted by NUI Galway and Safe Ireland found that the total average individual cost of domestic violence was €115,790.

The Council of Europe 2006 'Combating violence against women' study considered various studies into the economic cost of domestic violence. The most comprehensive of these studies (Walby:2004) estimated that the combined health, mental health, social services, civil legal costs, criminal justice sector, employment, housing, human and emotional cost was €555 per head of population.

In 2017 the European Institute for Gender Equality estimated that intimate partner violence against women costs EU member states €109bn per year. The three main types of costs identified were lost economic output, provision of services, including health, legal, social and specialised; and the personal, physical and emotional impact on the victim.

The Council of Europe document notes that, 'employers and the business sector have to bear substantial losses caused by the psychological and ill-health consequences of violence against women, such as unpredictable absenteeism from work, reduced productivity, poor concentration and accidents.'

## ACTIONS TO CREATE WORKPLACE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- ▶ Introduce legislation that provides for 10 days paid domestic violence leave
- ▶ Department of Justice and Equality to develop and roll out an online Creating Workplace Awareness of Domestic Violence information campaign in consultation with private sector employers
- ▶ The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) to incorporate in full the recommendations of the Employers' Guidelines on Domestic Abuse within all printed and online staff and management support materials
- ▶ A circular to be issued by government Ministers' to agencies under the aegis of her/his department to implement the Employers' Guidelines on Domestic Abuse
- ▶ The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to issue guidance to all non-commercial semi state agencies on the implementation of the Employers' Guidelines on Domestic Abuse



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# CREATING WORKPLACE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



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## FORWARD BY OFFALY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICE CLG

Domestic violence and sexual assault walk in the doors of each workplace every day in Ireland. Domestic Violence doesn't stop when you leave for work in the morning, it robs employees of their dignity and their health.

On a daily basis as a domestic abuse support service we have listened to many clients who disclose how they have experienced domestic violence in their work place such as; stalking, excessive phone calls and threats, dragged from their desks while working, leave work early due to a crisis at home, absenteeism from injury or stress, leaving their home at night with only the clothes on their backs, staying in a refuge which may be miles away from their support network, multiple court visits to seek a domestic violence orders. Ignorance of the issue is no longer an excuse, it is crucial that we break down any barriers or stigmas surrounding domestic abuse, so employees will not be afraid or ashamed to approach their managers about domestic violence concerns.

We strongly feel the introduction of a mandatory ten days statutory paid leave will show that at highest government level they recognise the need to support victims of domestic abuse not only in the home but also in the workplace. By facilitating this paid leave, it will enable the person experiencing the abuse to take time out from work without fear to put in place safeguards to keep themselves and their family safe without having to worry about losing a day's pay, forced to take annual leave, penalised or reprimanded or be at risk for losing their position within the organisation. This paid statutory leave will send a clear message that the health and safety of all employees is taken seriously and places the victim at the centre of the process at a time when they feel isolated and they have nowhere to turn.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A WORKPLACE ISSUE

Domestic violence impacts on an employee's performance at work resulting in lost hours and less productivity. Co-workers may be aware of a colleague's abuse but in the absence of a workplace policy are unsure on how best to support them. Managers need guidance on how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and how to respond to a staff member's disclosure. Employers have a duty of care to their staff and workplace health and safety procedures should include provisions that acknowledge domestic violence. Critically work can also provide a safe and supportive space for victims of abuse.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PAID LEAVE

New Zealand has introduced statutory paid leave for victims of domestic violence. New South Wales also introduced ten days paid domestic leave for all public sector employees. Paid leave is provided for in legislation in Canada's Manitoba and Ontario provinces and in the Philippines since 2004.

Following the passing of New Zealand's legislation Juncal Plazaola-Castaño Policy Specialist with UN Women's Ending Violence against Women section said, "Women who experience domestic violence have high rates of absenteeism at work and such a measure [paid leave for victims of domestic violence] can support them keep their employment. This policy can therefore contribute to more job security, economic opportunities and independence and greater chances for abused women to abandon an abusive relationship."

Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald TD and Maurice Quinlivan TD Workers Rights Spokesperson recently introduced the Organisation of Working Time (Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2019 to provides for 10 days paid domestic violence leave.

## CREATING AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The HSE, Adapt Domestic Abuse Services and Clare Haven Services have developed an Employers' Guidelines on Domestic Abuse handbook.

In November 2018 the Departments of Justice and Health in the north of Ireland produced substantive guidance on developing a workplace policy on domestic and sexual violence and abuse for employers.

Both documents outline the duty of care employers have to their employees to create a safe and supportive workplace for employees experiencing or at risk of domestic violence and the actions employers should take to achieve this.

Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service and Safe Ireland have produced useful guidelines to assist employers:-

- ▶ **Recognise possible signs of domestic abuse**
- ▶ **Create workplace awareness of domestic abuse**
- ▶ **Respond to disclosures of domestic abuse**

These documents outline the straightforward policies and practices organisations of all sizes can introduce to appropriately support their staff experiencing domestic violence and direct them to the help they need.

Simple actions such as information leaflets and posters in the canteen or the inclusion of an article on domestic violence in the monthly employees' newsletter can positively impact a victim who has yet to seek out help.