

# **BELFAST AREA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP**

## **Domestic Violence – A Trade Union Issue?**

21<sup>st</sup> June 2011

Carol Diffin, Chair

# N. Ireland Policy

## Context

- Tackling Violence at Home Strategy 2005 and Action Plan 2010 -2012 (Dept of Justice and DHSSPS) [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dactionplan2010](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dactionplan2010)
- Priority for Action 2009/2010 and 2010/2011
- Children Order N.I. 1995
- ACPC Regional Policy and Procedures 2005
- N.I. Policing Plan 2009-2012
- Homelessness Strategy 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998



# **The Belfast Area D V Partnership re established 2008.....**

***“To develop and maintain local partnerships  
for shared understanding and work to tackle  
Domestic Violence in the Belfast Area”***

(Mission Statement)



# Partnerships Aims

- Working together effectively
- Identify resources
- To support/lobby for initiatives that hold perpetrators accountable
- Strategic fit



# Membership

- Age N.I.
- Barnardo's
- Citizens Advice
- Community Safety Partnership
- Court Service / Solicitor
- District Policing Partnership
- Education
- Health and Social Services
- Housing Executive
- NSPCC
- PBNI
- PSNI
- Social Security Agency
- Trade Unions
- Victim Support
- Voluntary/Community Groups
- Women's Aid
- Women's Information Group



# Key Themes and Working Groups

- Prevention
- Protection and Justice
- Support
- Training and Development



# Prevention Working Group

*“Explore implementation of Domestic Violence Workplace Policies with private and public sector employees”  
( DHSSPS and DOJ Action Plan 2010-2012))*

## Belfast Area Domestic Violence Partnership

- Model Policy template developed.
- Focus group with service users.
- Seminar hosted by Clanmil Housing , facilitated by Business in The Community Feb 2010.
- Seminar hosted by NIPSA May 2010
- Seminar hosted by George Best Belfast City Airport, supported by BITC Nov 10

# Finally

Thank you for your  
attendance today.



**Noelle Collins**

**Belfast and Lisburn  
Women's Aid**

**Working to End Domestic Violence**

women's aid

Belfast and Lisburn

# Domestic Violence is....

“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.”

Inter-Departmental  
Tackling Violence at  
Home Strategy 2005

women's aid

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# Domestic Violence is....

“The intentional and persistent physical or emotional abuse of a woman, or of a woman and her children in a way that causes pain, distress or injury.”

*Women's Aid*

women's aid

Belfast and Lisburn

# 35 Years Working With Domestic Violence

- **1975 first refuge for women and children opened**
- **1981 DV Proceedings Order (NI) introduced**
- **1988 Homeless Act**
- **1992 research 'Bringing Out Into The Open'**
- **2005 'Tackling Violence at Home' government strategy**



*Belfast and Lisburn*



# Domestic Violence – A Crime

- PSNI Statistics indicate that they responded to a domestic violence incident every **21 minutes** of every day of the year
- The total of 9903 crimes with a domestic motivation represents an average of approximately 1 domestic crime every 53 minutes in Northern Ireland
- This means more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (**9903**) than the combined total of all the following crimes (**9864**):
  - All recorded sexual offences **1944**
  - Robbery **600**
  - Armed robbery **537**
  - Hijacking **119**
  - Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle **2975**
  - Arson **1980**
  - Dangerous driving **865**
  - Handling stolen goods **226**
  - Offences under anti-terrorism legislation **7**

women's aid

Belfast and Lisburn

# Domestic Violence – A Crime

- **18** recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland
- **7** classed as having a domestic motivation
- Represents 38.9% of all murders had a domestic motivation

women's aid

Belfast and Lisburn



# Women's Aid - Safety Protection & Support

- 3 refuges with over 100 bed spaces staffed 24 hours providing crisis intervention, needs and risk assessment and safety and support planning
- Outreach service supporting women and children to remain at home if safe to do so
- 2 One Stop Shops – Belfast and Downpatrick
- Work with children and young people in refuges, outreach and through education and prevention programmes in schools and youth settings
- Inter-Agency Partnerships
- Information and training on Domestic Violence to a range of agencies/ organisations
- Volunteering opportunities
- Influencing change.





# Domestic Violence and Abuse - A Trade Union Issue?

## LGBT Intimate Partner Abuse

Harriet Long – LGB & T Advocacy Worker  
[harriet@rainbow-project.org](mailto:harriet@rainbow-project.org)



# Sexual Orientation (LGB)

Sexual Orientation is a person's attraction,  
whether **emotional**, **psychological** and/  
or **sexual**,  
to people of the opposite or same gender.

This is made up of feelings, behaviour and  
identity

# How many LGB people are there?

- It is estimated that between 6% - 10% of the UK population are Bisexual, Gay or Lesbian.
- This would mean that between and 101,100 and 168,500 people in Northern Ireland fit into this group

Based on National Statistics 2006, estimated population for NI of 1,685,000.

# Heterosexism

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexual relationships are natural, normal and worthy of support. These assumptions are systematic and insitutionalised.

(Ristock 2005)



# LGB Intimate Partner Abuse

1 in 4 LGB people  
experience  
relationship abuse

(Broken Rainbow UK)



**No-one will  
take me  
seriously**

**No-one will  
understand**

**People don't  
know that I'm  
gay**

**In a same sex relationship your partner  
can deliberately use your sexual identity  
and orientation as a form of control**

**Threatening to 'out' you to family, friends, partners,  
colleagues, neighbours, church group**

**Undermining and belittling your sexual orientation and  
questioning your identity**

**Controlling how you express yourself as an LGB person**

**Controlling your social life and interactions with other LGB  
people.**

**Forcing you to act 'straight'**

**It's hard to  
get help**

**It's hard to know  
what to do**

**It's hard to  
talk about**

**There are lots of reasons why people don't tell anyone what is happening to them or seek help. If you are gay, lesbian or bisexual there are even more...**

Messages in society make your sexual orientation and identity feel abnormal, wrong and/or misguided and so it is harder to come forward to discuss problems in your relationship.

You may feel vulnerable, fearful and confused and not want to disclose your sexual orientation to strangers

Your partner may have isolated you from friends, family and professionals that even if you want to seek help you are not sure how to or where to.

You may be afraid that people will not believe you or take you seriously.

You might worry about homophobia and assumptions being made about your sexual orientation and your relationship



“It is because we face oppression and because we have built unique communities that battering is different in our relationships that heterosexual ones....Understanding these differences is critical to recognising battering outside its stereotypical heterosexual form.”

Allen & Leventhal, 1999

# Sexual Orientation in the Workplace

- 1 in 4 LGB people conceal their SO in the workplace
- 33% of LGB people don't know anyone else in their organisation who is LGB
- 27% of LGB people believe that their SO will have a negative impact on their chances of progressing at work

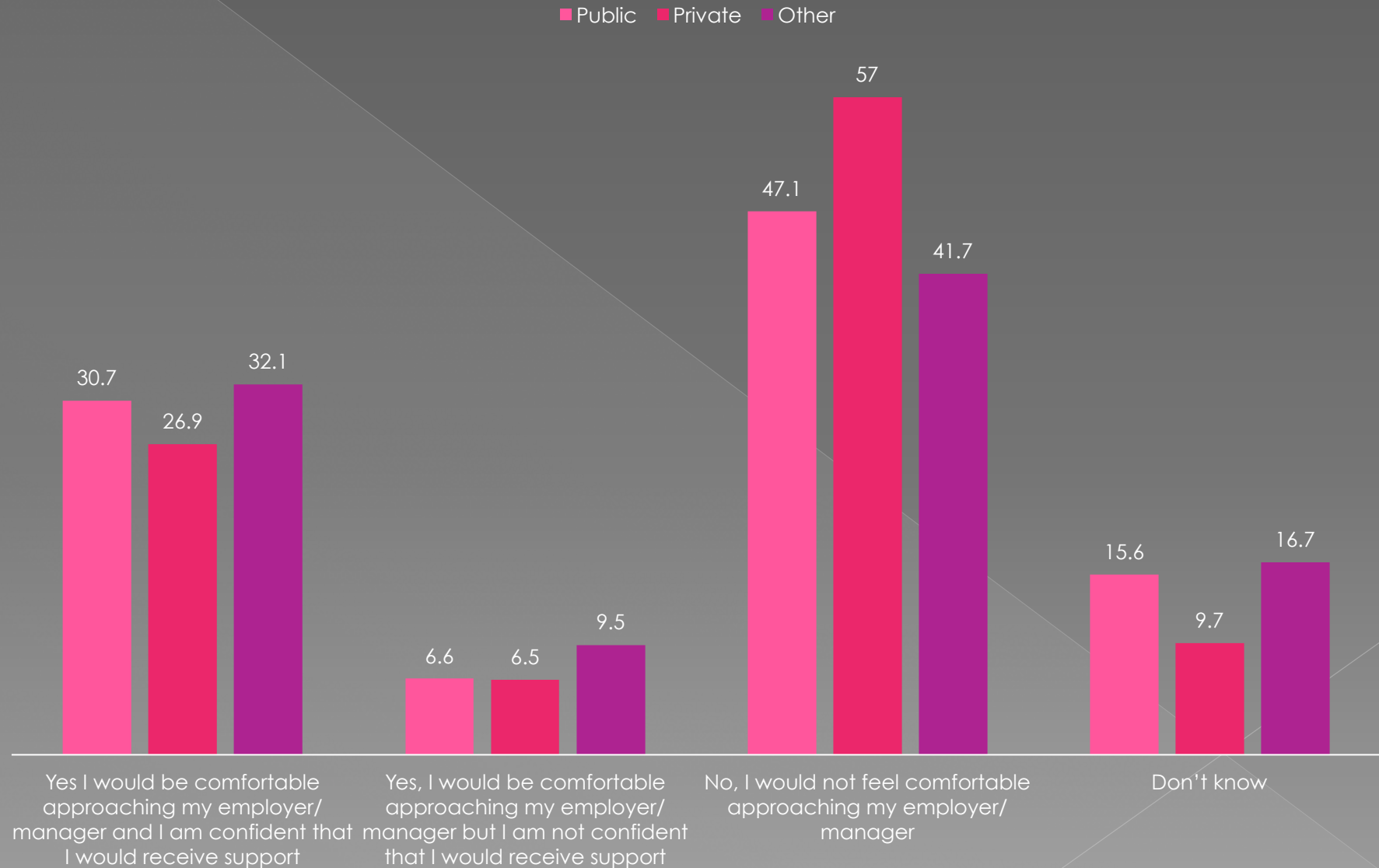
(McDermott 2011)

# Same Sex Domestic Violence Policy

- Over half of respondents (52%) from the public sector said that they did not know if their organisation had a domestic violence policy or if it mentioned support for same sex attracted people. (McDermott 2011)



# Approaching A Manager



# Recommendations:

- Review and/or develop equality and diversity policies and practice -offering the same workplace entitlements and support for LGB people as their heterosexual counterparts
- Introduce SO training of broad issues affecting LGB employees including relationship abuse
- Include participation at training in staff appraisals
- Address heterosexism in language, imagery, humour etc.
- Include a specific same sex relationship abuse section in your domestic violence workplace policy
- Provide information on and reference to LGB support & services outside the organisation
- Liaise and build relationships with existing LGB staff groups. Develop a staff group if not.

# What we haven't looked at:

- ◉ Homophobic Family Abuse
- ◉ Transgender & Gender Identity
- ◉ Intimate Partner Abuse for Transgender People
- ◉ Transphobic Family Abuse

All impacting the workforce & requiring employers & services to develop nuanced knowledge & support.



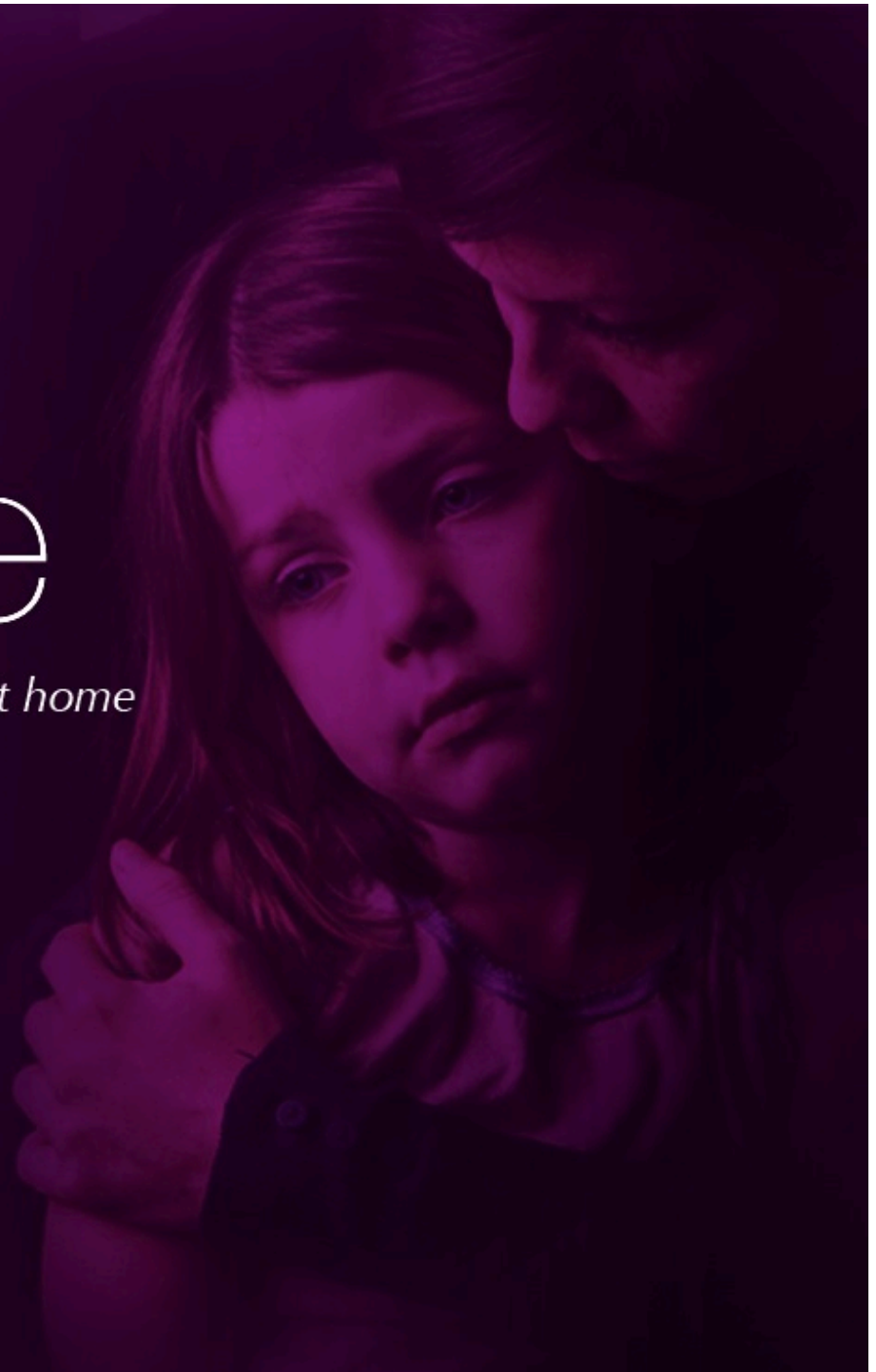
# Partnerships

- ◉ RSG – Domestic & Sexual Violence Unit
- ◉ Prevention & Support Sub Group – ‘Hard to Reach’ groups
- ◉ Victim Support
- ◉ PSNI (PPU’s, RCU, MARAC and Community Safety)
- ◉ LGBT&T groups
- ◉ Scottish Women’s Aid
- ◉ Domestic Violence Helpline

*Campaigning on behalf of all victims of*

# Domestic Violence

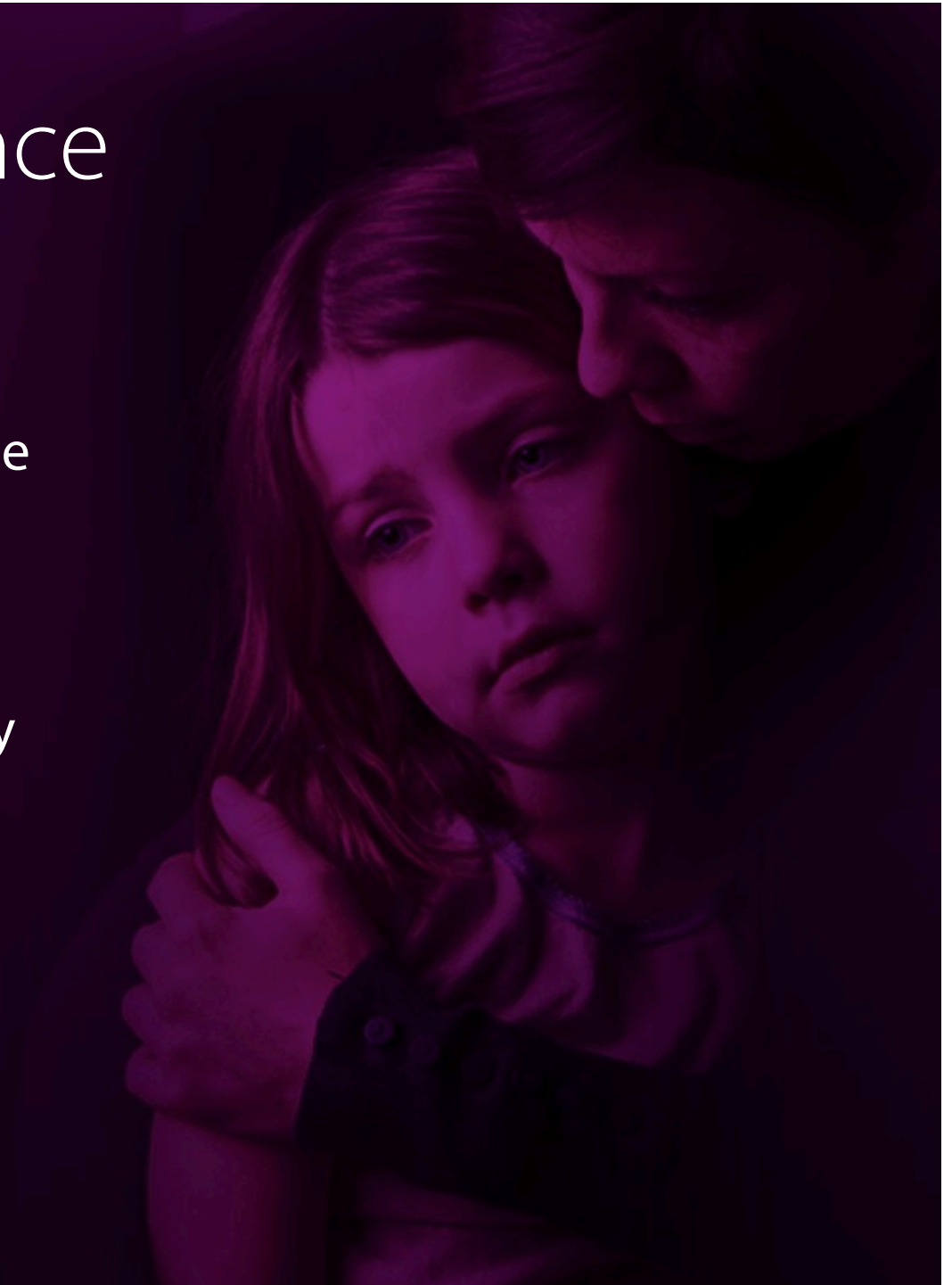
*at work or at home*



# Domestic Violence

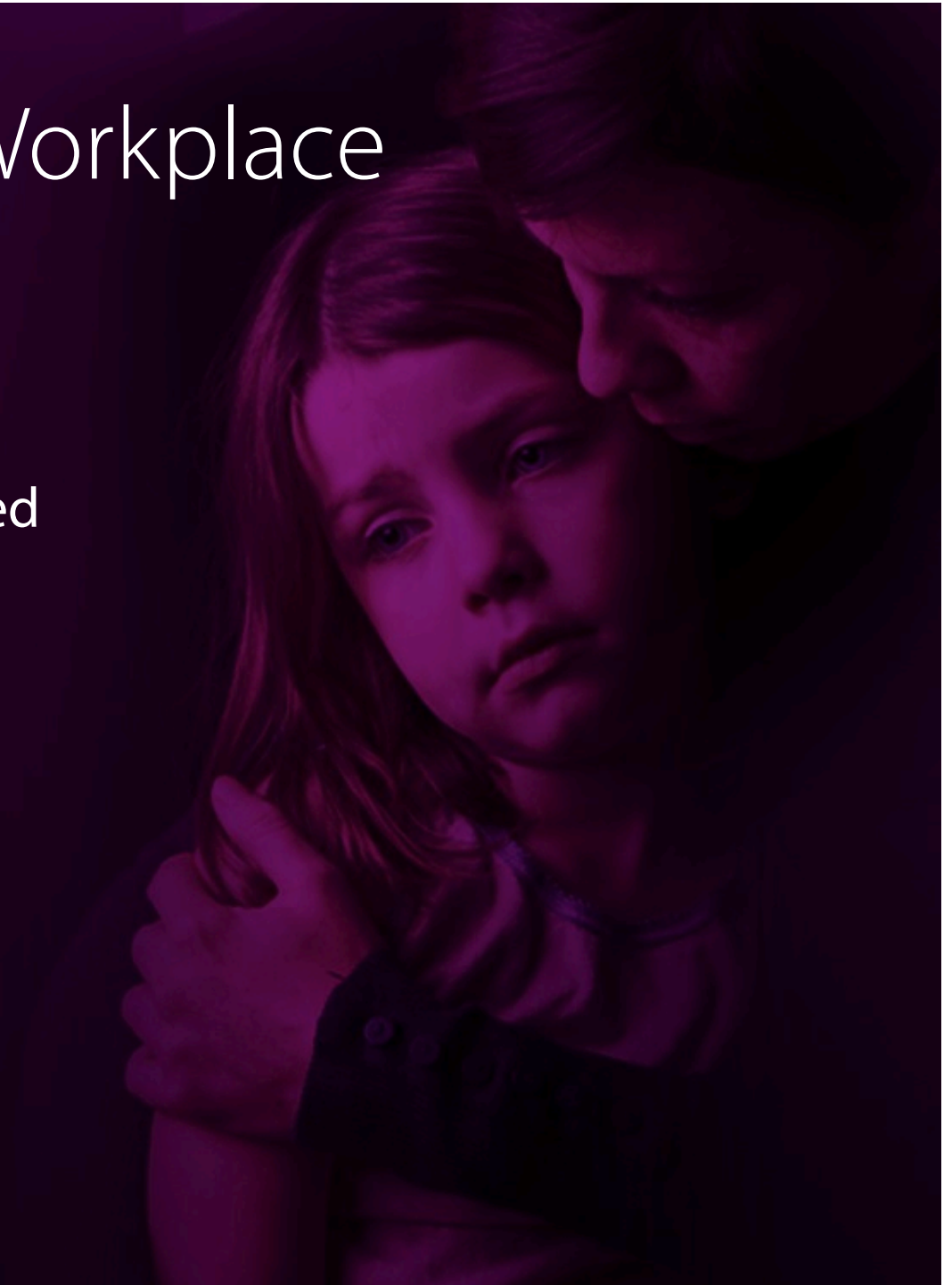
## Today's Objectives

- Explain why it is a workplace issue
- How you, as Trade Union Representatives, can identify and support employees



# Impact on the Workplace

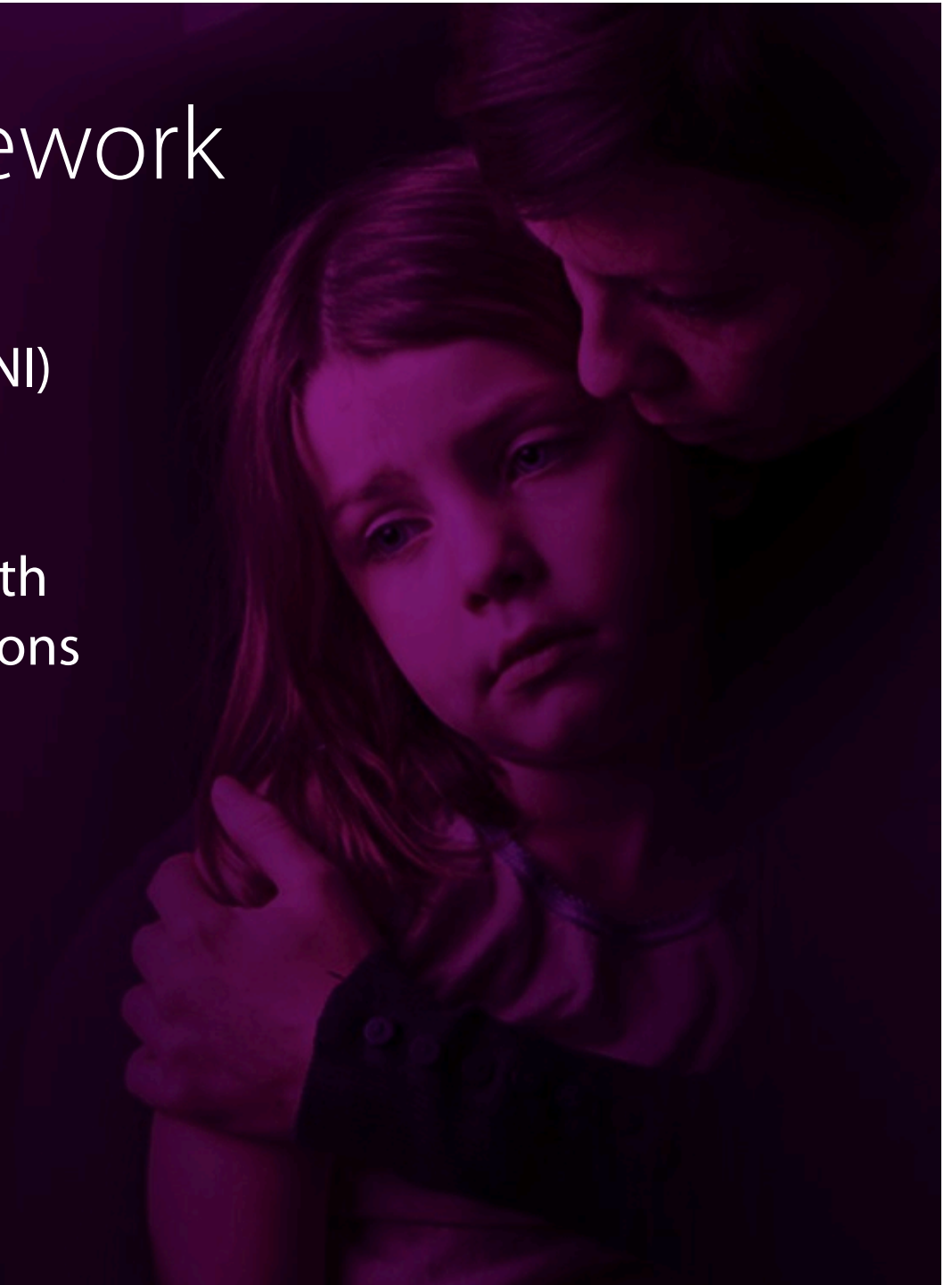
- A deterioration in an employee's performance
- Increased and unexplained absenteeism
- Poor time-keeping
- Threat to job security and prospects





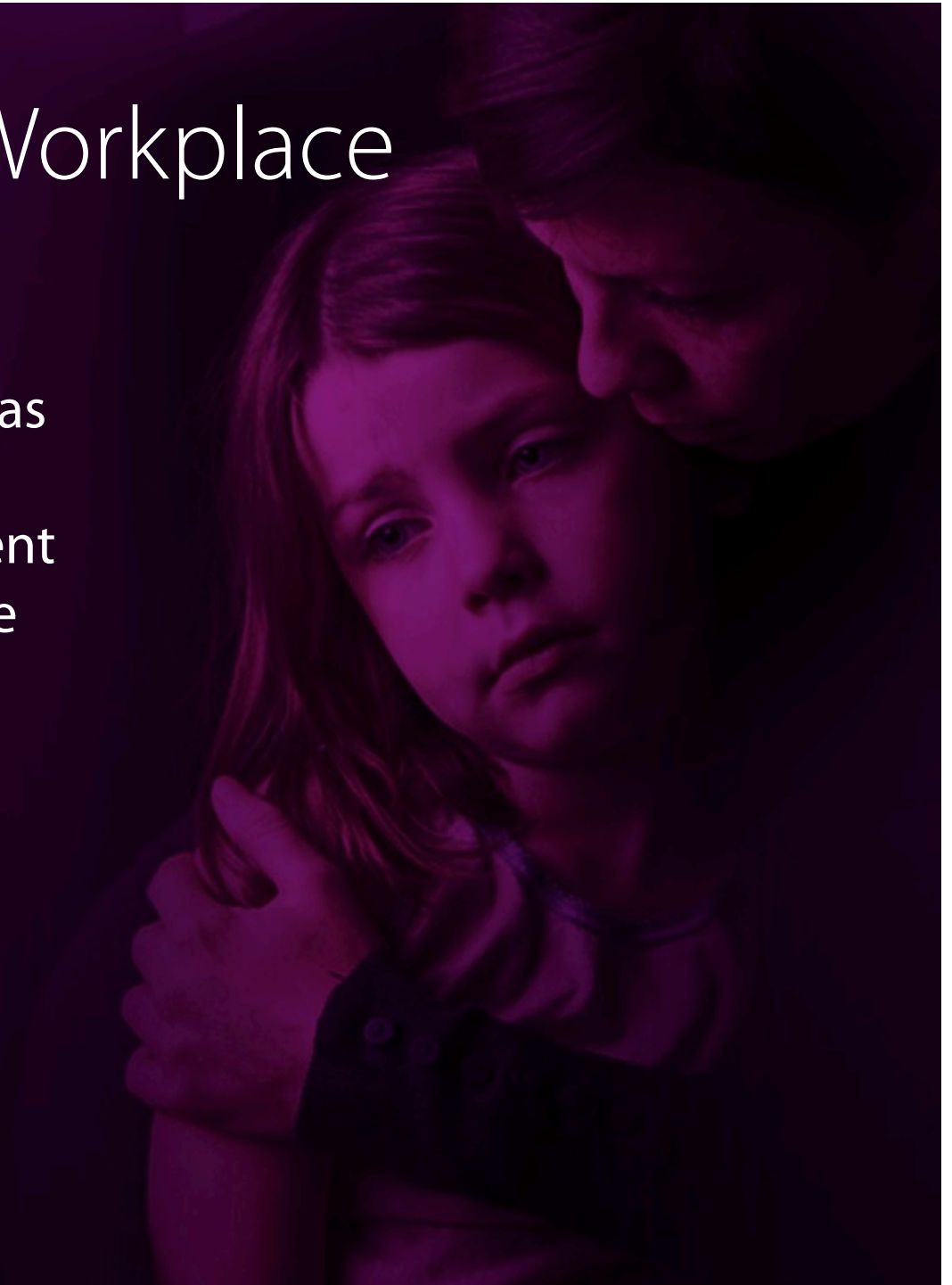
# The Legal Framework

- Duty of Care under the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978
- The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 1992



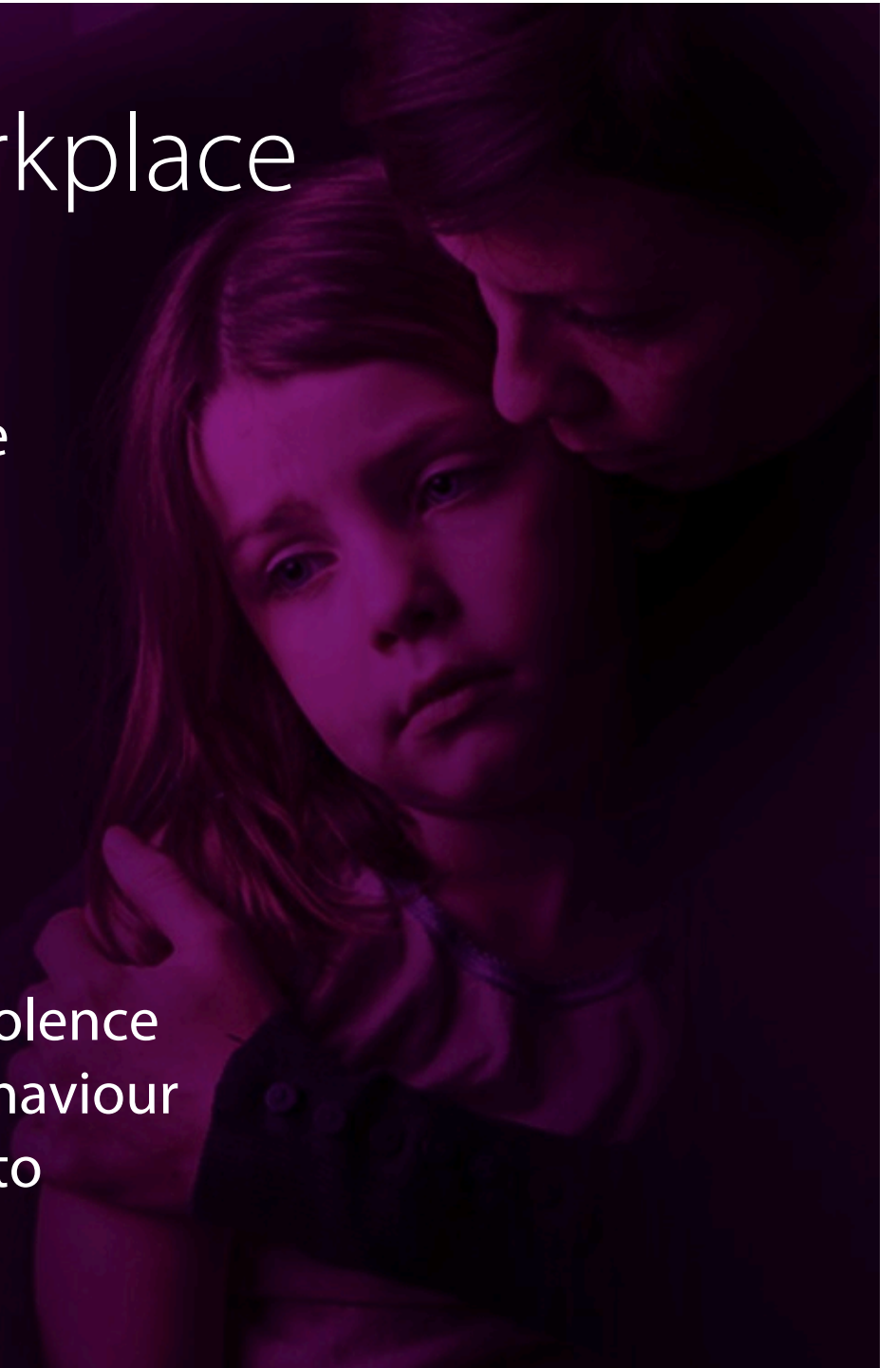
# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

- A policy statement that has clear aims and states the organisation's commitment to treat domestic violence seriously
- A clear definition of domestic violence



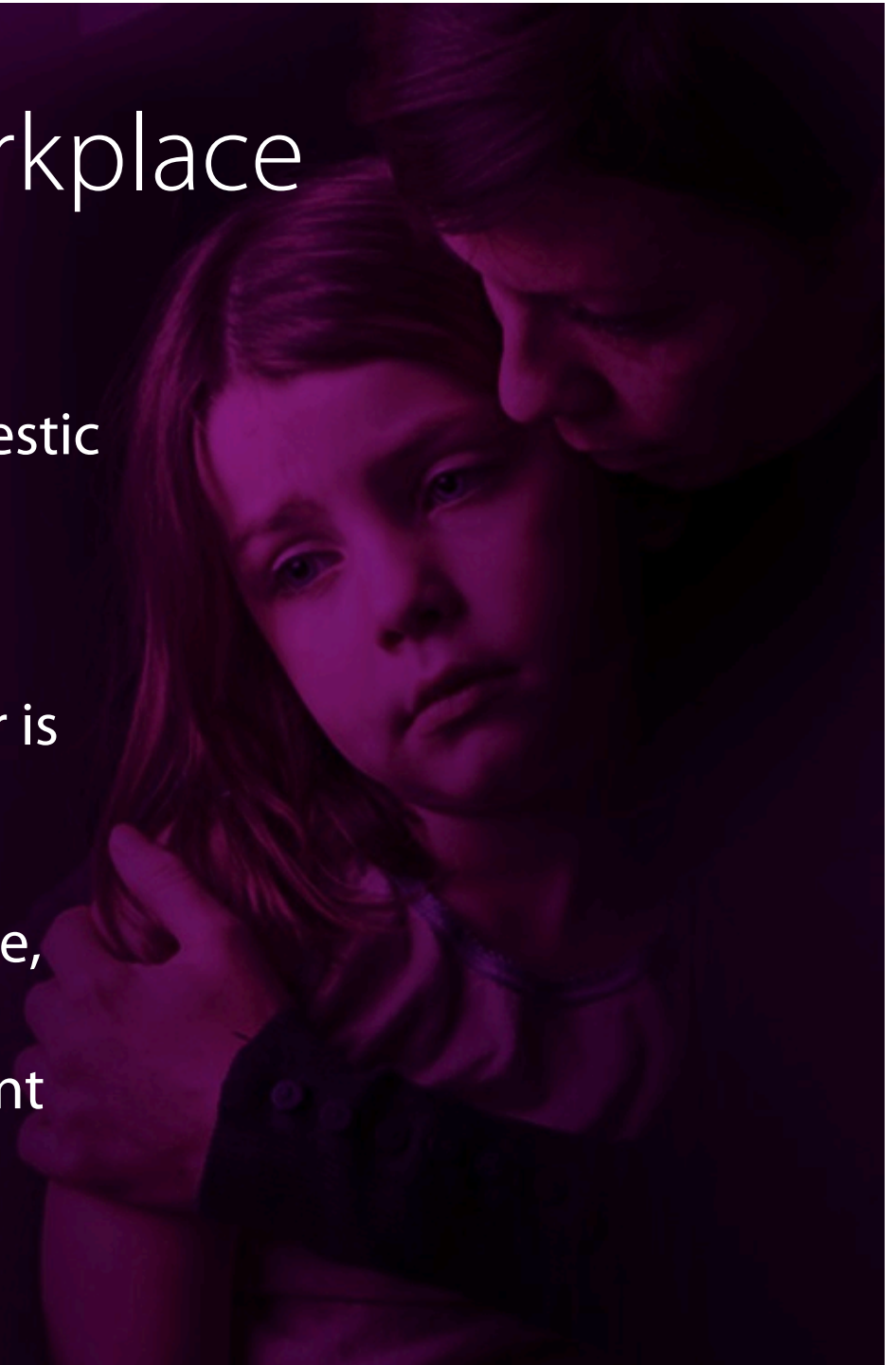
# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

- An acknowledgement that the majority of victims are women but that men are also affected as are women and men in same-sex relationships
- A clear statement that the organisation 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



# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

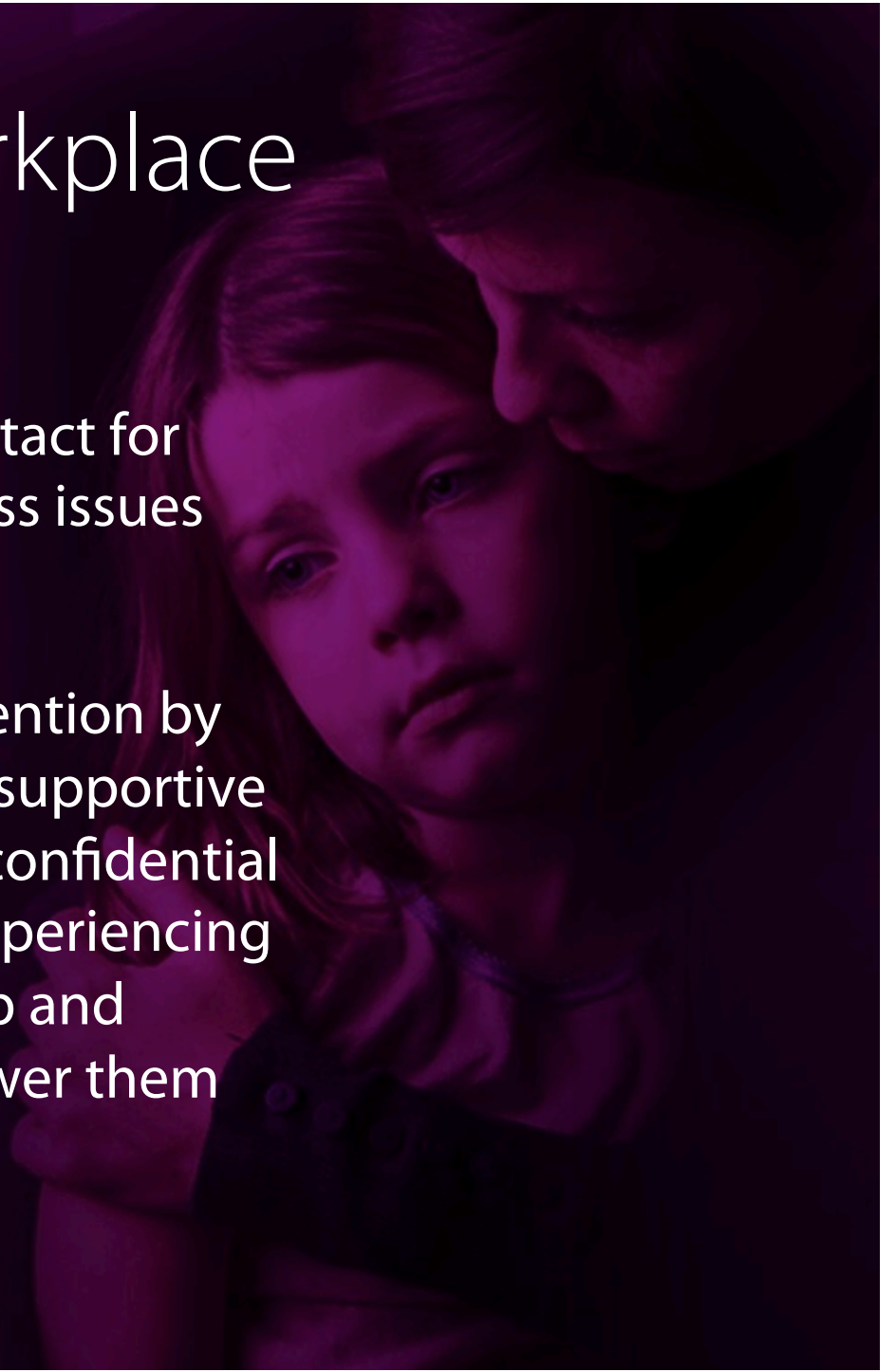
- A statement that, where domestic violence occurs or has the potential to occur in the workplace, the paramount consideration of the employer is to ensure the health and well-being of employees and to ensure that, where appropriate, perpetrators of abuse are challenged and held to account to reduce the potential for re-offending





# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

- Details of the first point of contact for employees who need to discuss issues around domestic violence
- A commitment to early intervention by identifying ways of creating a supportive environment and to creating confidential mechanisms for employees experiencing domestic violence to seek help and information in order to empower them to make their own decisions



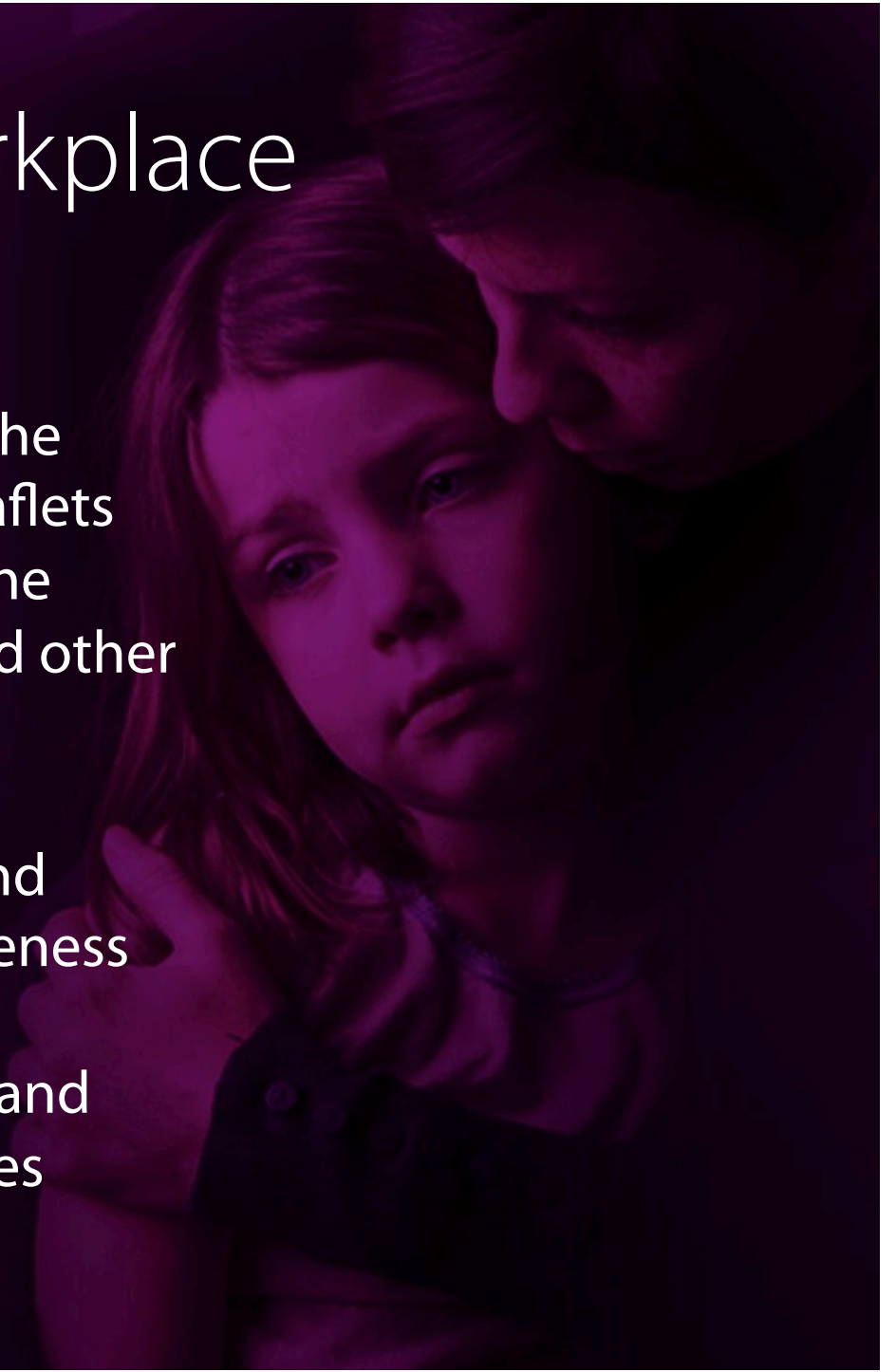
# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

- A commitment to offering ongoing support to employees experiencing domestic violence including time off
- A commitment to training and educating on domestic violence issues



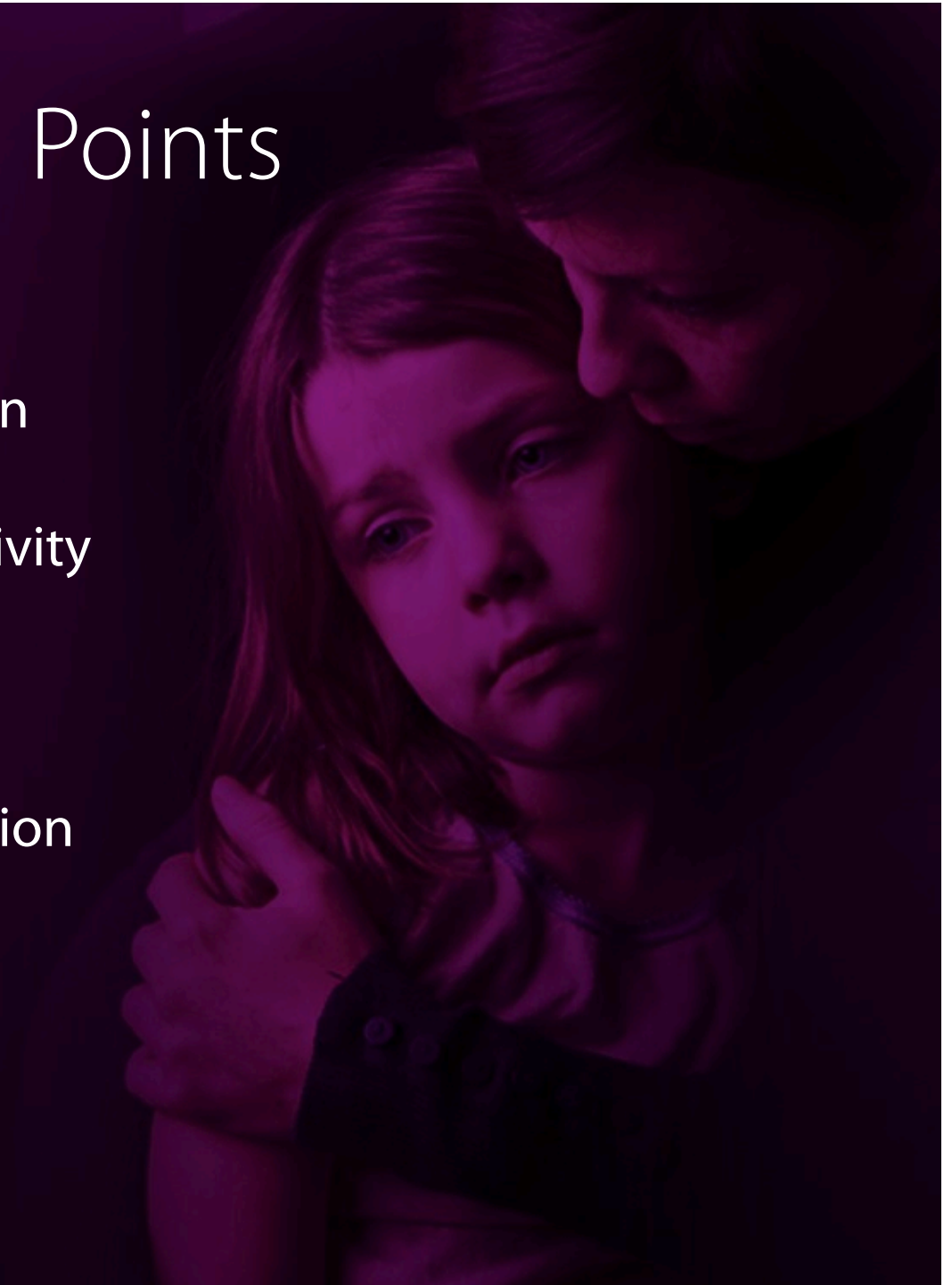
# What should a Workplace Policy cover?

- Provision of resources within the workplace, such as posters, leaflets etc to raise awareness about the domestic violence helpline and other support services and
- Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the policy's effectiveness and for regularly updating information on help available and how to contact support services



# Key Negotiating Points

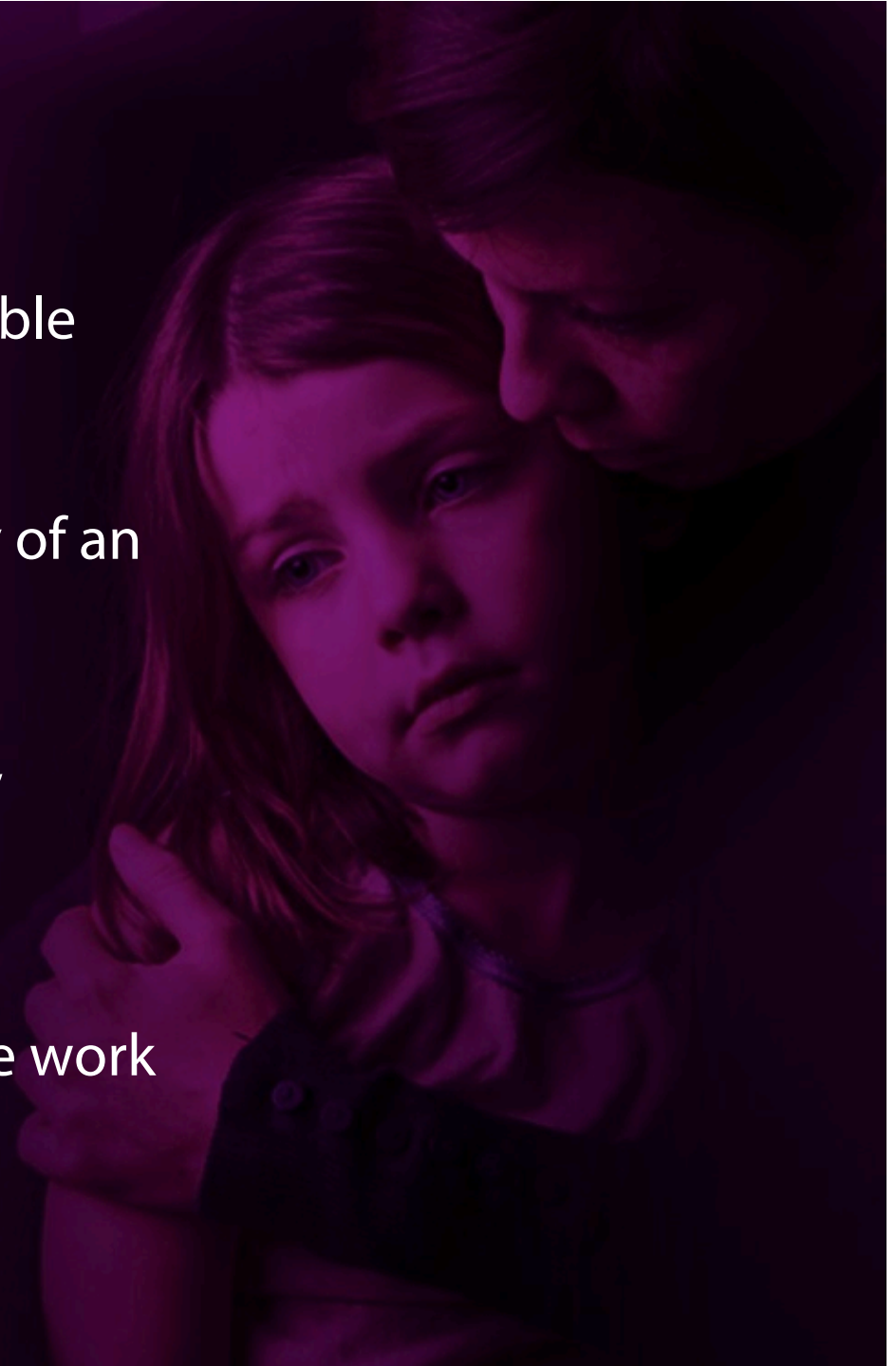
- Recruitment and retention
- Staff morale and productivity
- Disciplinary action
- Public image and reputation





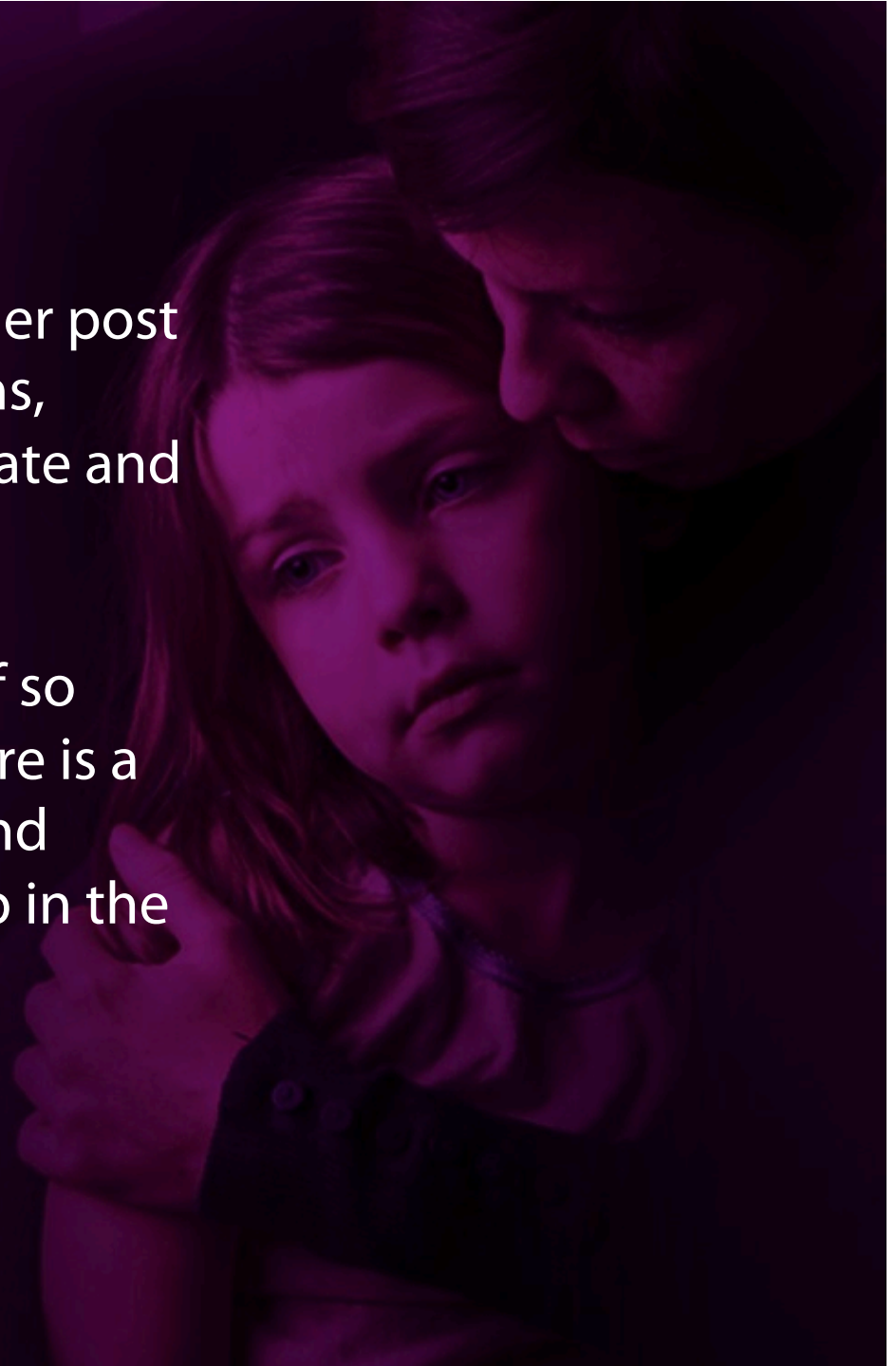
# Ways to Help

- Allowing flexible or more flexible working or special leave
- Offer financial support by way of an advance in pay
- Provide access to appropriate, confidential, independent professional counselling
- Allow the individual to change work patterns or workload



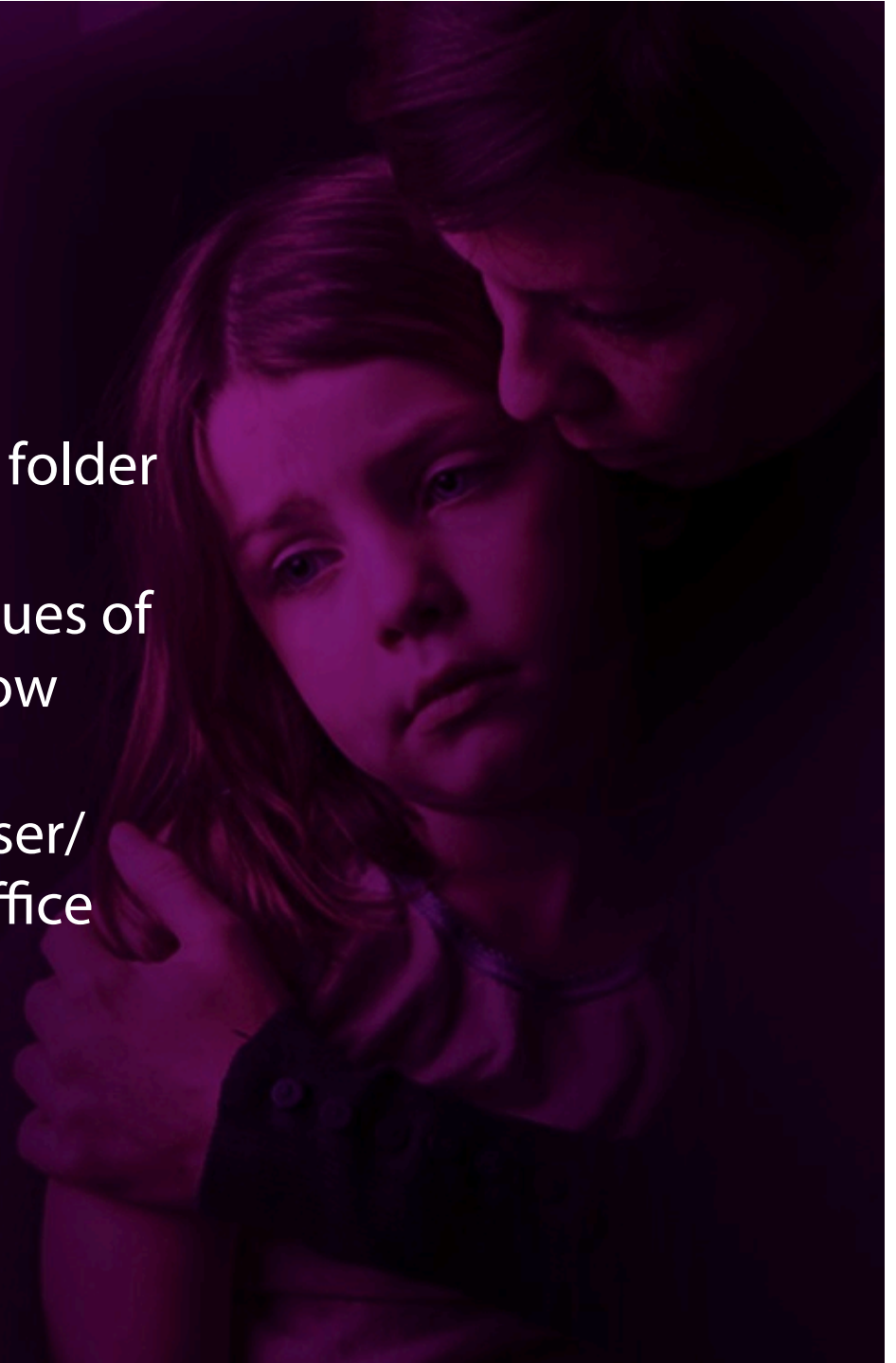
# Ways to Help

- Facilitating a transfer to another post or relocation, for safety reasons, where this would be appropriate and supportive of the employee
- Awareness training for all staff so that they understand why there is a need for a workplace policy and know how to behave and help in the situation



# Ways to Help

- Diverting telephone calls
- Diverting emails to a separate folder
- With consent advising colleagues of the situation on a need-to-know basis and agreeing what the response should be if the abuser/alleged abuser contacts the office



# **Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Domestic Abuse Support Service**

**Orla Barron  
Health & Social Inequalities Manager  
June 2011**



Belfast Health and  
Social Care Trust

**Domestic Abuse**  
Confidential Support for all Trust Staff



# Background

- Biggest employer in Northern Ireland
- 78% female/22% male
- Tasked with delivery of best health and social care services to Belfast population of some 340,000 people + regional services
- Purpose of organisation is to improve health and well-being and reduce health and social inequalities



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# How common is domestic violence in the workplace?

- Not uncommon for abuser to seek out abuse partner at work –risk for victim & colleagues
- Approx. 18,700 violent workplace events committed by partner
- 74% employed battered women are harassed by their partners at work, either in person or over the phone



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# Why a workplace policy on domestic abuse?

- Duty of care
- Moral /Ethical reasons
- Human Right – fundamental right to be free from abuse
- Business case – it is a workplace issue – impact on performance, health and social well-being, motivation, concentration, absenteeism etc



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# Lets take a moment to think....

- Perpetrator comes home – not happy – terror sets in, tension building, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse...little or no sleep...
- Next day, get kids up ...upset and concerned, have to keep them quiet for fear of waking perpetrator (**75% of mothers said kids had witnessed domestic violence, 33% had seen their mothers beaten, 10% had witnessed sexual violence**)  
Get them to school – no bus fare/petrol money
- Into work – arrives late, not able to concentrate, not performing, mistake made .....manager calls you in ... Verbal warning
- Abusive texts start, silent phone calls, team members vexed that you are not sharing workload- tension building in office
- Nearly time to go home – what lies ahead???....



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# Impact on individual

- Someone who is battered psychologically and/or physically, beaten and urinated on – how much self-esteem can they retain? How can they be expected to perform in the workplace?
- A factor of at least 1 in 4 suicide attempts by women. *Stark and Flitcraft 1996.*
- The impact of domestic violence has been found to have psychological parallels with the impact of torture and the imprisonment on hostages. *Graham et al 1988.*
- DV knows no boundaries of culture, age, sexual preference, body ability, class, ethnicity or creed. *Lloyd 1997.*



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# Journey so far

- February 08 – workplace policy and plan of action with Trade Unionside
- Based on original good practice example of SEBT Legacy Trust and Unison
- Working in partnership with Trade Unionside
- Executive Team + TJNF ratified approach in April 08



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# Support Worker

- Trawled for expressions of interest for voluntary role of support worker
- Recognised importance of diversity of officer –gender, age, location, professional background, level
- 30 support workers shortlisted with managerial approval
- 2 day intensive training –Women's Aid, MAP, Rainbow Project, PSNI, DVU at DHSSPSNI, Staffcare and Social Work



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# Role

- Not to “rescue”
- To listen, to inform of options, to signpost, to offer practical and emotional support
- Practical examples – time off for appointments, court dates, salary advance, act as intermediary, change location, contact number, hours of work, liaise with manager



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# Awareness

- Raise awareness of domestic abuse, impact on workplace, support service for staff
- Official launch in December 08 – attended by Chief Executive and Chair
- Newspaper articles, information on intranet, payslips, posters
- Lunchtime awareness sessions
- Targeted training – Occupational Health, Managers, Staff

# Continuous Journey

- Pilot & evaluation completed – Occupational Health, refresher training
- Regular review meetings with DASOs
- Share best practice – mutual learning
- “Domestic Violence happens to “**regular**” people”
- An evolving and challenging piece of work, but worthwhile



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# [www.belfastdvp.co.uk](http://www.belfastdvp.co.uk)

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