

Devon County Council Domestic Abuse Survey

November 2007

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In November 2007 Devon County Council asked all staff with access to email to complete a domestic violence questionnaire. This survey lasted for a two week period at the end of which 1,334 had responded: 993 saying they were female and 333 male.

This followed on from an earlier survey (June 2004) which helped the Council to introduce practice changes. These were: i) continued strategic commitment and funding for the against domestic violence and abuse partnership (adva), enabling the wide-scale provision of specialist support services across Devon; ii) updated Domestic Violence Policy (October 2007); iii) provision of specialist training for Managers in 2007-8 (15 courses); iv) the establishment of a peer-mentoring volunteer scheme, Domestic Violence and Abuse Contacts; and v) the formation of a strategic cross-directorate steering group, meeting quarterly, chaired by Phil Norrey.

The purpose of this 2007 survey was to inform Devon County Council, as an Employer, of the issues affecting staff in relation to domestic violence and abuse. The findings will provide information from staff to inform further changes and improvements across the organisation.

A follow up survey will be conducted in 2008-2009 to measure the impact of practice developments during 2008.

Table 1: Age profile of respondents

Age	%	Number
16-24	4%	50
25-34	18%	238
35-54	58%	773
55-64	20%	263
65 and over	1%	7

Victims/Survivors

Key Findings:

- 21% (284) of respondents had been at the receiving end of domestic violence or abuse; 11% (32) of these indicated they are experiencing current abuse.
- Of those who have experienced domestic violence 13 respondents, current or in the past, take off 1-2 days from work each month; 9 respondents take off 3 – 4 days each month and 7 respondents take off 5 or more days (Table 2)
- 106 of the respondents who experienced domestic violence said that the domestic abuse had caused them problems at work; 162 said it had not.
- Of 50 respondents who had experienced abuse, 42 (84%) said their manager did support them; 8 (16%) said they did not.
- 25 current victim respondents are receiving support outside DCC; 2 of the victims are receiving support from within DCC; 207 of the victims are receiving no support.

Table 2: Victims views on time taken off work each month due to domestic violence and abuse

Days	%	Number	Days per month
1 or 2 days	23%	13	13-26
3 or 4 days	16%	9	27-36
5 days or more	12%	7	35 +
Total per annum		29	75-87

Table 3: Victims views on how domestic violence affects their work?

Problems experienced	%	Number
Low self esteem	85%	90
Loss of concentration	75%	79
Low energy	64%	68
Time off sick	32%	34
Reduced career development	32%	34
Poor quality of work	29%	31
Working overtime	26%	28
Adversely affected job prospects	22%	23
Conflicts with colleagues	10%	11
Conflict with manager	11%	12
Other*	8%	8

*Other affects for victims include:

“Need to avoid meetings, block any locality training opportunities & venues & jobs which might bring me into contact with perpetrator, so limits me”

“Some training courses trigger memories which can make you feel a victim again.”

“Perpetrator still works in same building - occasionally I feel vulnerable although have excellent support from senior colleague and management.”

“Unable to write and work independently”

“Difficulty attending training/meetings/venues as perpetrator works in the same directorate I feel I am overly careful of working with and not overtly influencing any support the clients referred to me, who may have experienced a similar situation to my own, may need for their own recovery. A sort of barrier to performing to my best ability”

Victims’ perceptions of their colleagues and managers awareness of their domestic violence situation

- Of the 284 victims 30 (11%) said they thought their work *colleagues* are aware they are experiencing domestic abuse; 193 (68%) victims do not think their colleagues are aware
- 51 (18%) think their *managers* are aware of their situation; 165 (58%) do not think their managers are aware

Table 4: Victims views of the support received from their Managers

Type of support	%	number
Opportunity to talk confidentially about your domestic abuse	91%	38
Flexible working options (eg time off to visit solicitor/support service; flexible hours; advance pay; change role/venue to safeguard individual; keep phone no./address strictly confidential	57%	24
Access to info about support services to victims	31%	13
Access to someone to talk to confidentially within DCC independent of manager/directorate	21%	9
Posters and leaflets to raise awareness	7%	3
Other*	7%	3
Access to info about support services to perpetrators	5%	2

*Other:

“Excellent support helps keep me safe from verbal harassment & from needing to come into contact with perpetrator”

“Able to discuss matter outside work”

“My manager is there for me, but I am coping quite well with the problem I have at the moment”.

Table 5: Support services and agencies being accessed by victims

Agency	Number
Counsellor	16
GP	15
Police	8
Victim Support	7
Other*	7
DCC Counselling Service	6
Women's Aid outreach	6
DCC Manager	5
DCC Colleague	3
Confidential helpline	2
Women's Aid refuge	2
A&E	2
Rape & Sexual Abuse line	1

*Other agencies sought by victims outside DCC are: psychotherapist; hospital specialist; solicitor; Devon Partnership Trust

Victims' comments on other support they would like from DCC:

"Peer group support"

"Opportunity to change work email address if necessary"

"Support need to relocate to another local authority if ultimately necessary"

"Free Legal Advice"

"Disciplinary action should be considered re perpetrators of DV"

"Link to other agencies who can assist in supporting individuals and their family"

"Change of name. Clarity of what will happen if the partner/spouse is an employee"

"Compulsory training/awareness for all Team leader's, supervisor's and managers"

"DCC staff support groups"

"Access to individual counselling and support to engage on the "Pattern Changing" course"

Managers

Key findings:

- 414 or 31% of respondents were managers (65% (268) female and 35% (142) male)
- 14% (56) managers have dealt with a member of staff as a victim of domestic violence.
- 1% (4) managers have dealt with a member of staff as a perpetrator of domestic violence; 75% (355) had not dealt with either victim or perpetrator.
- Of those 60 managers who have dealt with a victim or perpetrator 81% (48) felt confident with the situation and 19% (11) did not feel confident
- The most common support provided by managers to staff who are victims of domestic abuse is the opportunity to talk confidentially about their domestic abuse (91%, (38) victims),. The next most common support provided is flexible working options, 57%,(24) .
- 17% (71) of managers had discussed domestic violence and abuse at team meetings; 9% (38) at Directorate team meetings and 75% (310) at neither.

Managers views on Domestic Violence and Abuse Training

- 27% (110) had received general training about domestic violence. 73% (304) had not.
- 163 managers had not attended domestic training but intended to; 106 had not attended domestic abuse training and did not intend to.
- 8% (34) had received DCC's DA training for managers. 91% (378) had not.
- Of those 34 who had attended DCC's domestic abuse training, 84% (29) said that the training had helped them to understand how to deal with dva as a manager; 6% (2) felt that it had not helped.

Managers' comments on what they would do if they were aware of staff experiencing or perpetrating abuse:

"If experiencing abuse I would acknowledge that I was aware of something and offer the opportunity to discuss. If the staff member was the perpetrator I really don't know. I suppose I would let them know that I had heard and ask for their account. I would seek advice from HR. It depends on the circumstances whether I would seek their removal from the team"

“Offer them full support and enable them to work flexi hours to support them whilst they were sorting things out. Also ensure they were not under too much pressure at work”

“Often victims are reluctant to talk about DV. I would try and give support and ask why they were looking or feeling as they were. I would need to be convinced that they were telling the truth. I would then contact W@W if I felt there was an issue”

“I would raise awareness of DCC policies and offer a listening ear in the first instance”

“Sign post to appropriate support. Further action depends on the situation and needs of the individual”

“I would recommend they contact wellbeing @work dept as we have a responsibility to support the "whole person." If staff carry personal baggage they cannot perform well at work”.

Managers’ comments on why they would not engage with staff experiencing or perpetrator abuse:

“Not trained”

“Not really sure how to approach the subject!”

“I would consider it an intrusion unless approached by staff member in question in the first instance”.

Managers’ comments about not feeling confident in dealing with a domestic abuse situation:

“At the time which was some years ago there was not very much information or support available|”

“Insufficient training also became too personal”

“No amount of training prepares you for the reality of an individual’s situation but it does give you more to offer that person in terms of support skills”

“At the time, they denied it was happening and I felt I could not pry”

“A lack of background knowledge to the situation in respect of DCC policy placed me in a difficult situation as the abuse was not affecting the person's work practice”

“The member of staff was not requesting help and knew the necessary steps to take but initiating them was extremely difficult and I did not have the tools to facilitate that either”

“Not sure where to go”.

Victims' comments on why they did not tell their manager about their abuse:

"It was the past (this was true for many respondents)"

"Do not have sufficient confidence in their support"

"Consider it a private issue"

"It doesn't affect my work and I choose to stay with the threats and intimidation because of my children. My youngest is 16 - I'm nearly there! In eighteen months time when he goes to University my life will change. I'm not in danger of death"

"I'm not prepared to talk about it to her"

"Irrelevant - not a work issue. Hadn't thought of it. Couldn't do anything about it? Low level abuse"

"I don't trust my manager enough"

"It is too private a thing to discuss and risk having known generally"

"I was the manager at the time"

"I tend not to discuss personal problems with work colleagues"

"Scared to inform as may be judgemental and assume I can't perform job".

Victims' comments on the support provided by their managers:

"Support from women's aid outreach changed my life and my children's for the better, my husband has been on a perpetrator program and continues to deal with his anger management issues"

"Good to finally let my (previous) boss know but no follow up on support or contacts of other people who could help me. Plus after an initial period, they seem to have forgotten and seem to believe that when you escape from the perpetrator that life is normal - and it isn't!"

"Life saving at the time, greatly valued, excellent & empathic, really helped me cope"

"The Support offered me >Security. >Continuity of normal life outside the violent 'zone' >Understanding and support. Not all managers would be capable of offering this, it would be good for all departments to know who might be appropriately trained to be able to offer the right kind of support and cope with the role of supporter"

"Very helpful - good to have someone to talk to"

"I think it is difficult for anyone not specifically trained as a counsellor or having had similar experience to understand the long-term effects of domestic abuse. The support was sympathetic but not very constructive in helping me to recover"

"I was very lucky with my managers and their support. I was also very lucky to benefit from counselling organized by DCC. It has helped tremendously. I will go back to the

counsellor privately in the future as some issues have effected me so much that I still get flash backs”

“In my case it was excellent, the abuse went on for years during which time my managers and colleagues gradually became aware and were extremely supportive and understanding. I was allowed flexi time in work to access support, police, solicitor etc and a colleague came with me if I wanted it. It culminated with 3 months off work sick last year when I moved into a refuge with my children, I was not made to feel bad in any way about taking this time off even though it was a time of high pressure”

“It depends on the person / manager. It is very hard for people to understand if you haven't been in that situation yourself. A bit of understanding and some support, time off to make calls etc and someone to talk to on a bad day is good. You do not want to make a big deal about it or want a fuss. Just the facts some understanding and being able to make someone feel that they have some control / choice”

“This was some while ago - before I divorced. The support enabled me to have the strength to actually go through with the divorce and I have to say it was the most liberating action of my life”

“My manager was great when it happened & very understanding. Her support was invaluable & kept me going even though it was really difficult. The best thing was that she never forgot about it, but carried on ensure I was safe in my working context, particularly as the perpetrator works in the same directorate. She is always mindful of protecting me from unnecessary contact - i.e. joint training/meetings etc. She knew a lot about the effects of DV”

“I have a very supportive manager and due to my knowledge of domestic violence was able to access the external support I required - as soon as I admitted to myself that it was a problem that wasn't going to go away - and it wasn't my fault”

“My manager and colleagues were all very supportive - I made it quite clear to everyone what had happened as I thought it was important they knew. I took up the offer of counselling but found for me personally it didn't really help much- I preferred to rely on my friends! The incident I suffered which was ABH, had a more profound effect on me that I thought it would, and it has taken me a good 6 months to get back to 'normal'”

“Very supported and understanding of a difficult situation which was difficult to discuss only told manager on advice from domestic violence police best move I made as it opened the floodgates to tell other people also made easier to attend court appearances and ask for time off”

“DPT has been incredibly flexible. Allowing post to be directed to workplace. Also offering to pay a cheque rather than money to go into a joint account. They have offered time to discuss my situation. With the support I was enabled to have the courage to end the relationship and the abuse I had suffered for many years”

Colleagues

Key findings:

- 11% (151) of respondents know someone in their workplace who is a victim
- 0% (4) of respondents know someone in their workplace who is a perpetrator
- 88% (1172) of respondents do not know either a victim or a perpetrator in their workplace.

Table 6: Colleagues perception of victims' impact in the workplace (151 respondents)

Feature	%	number
None of the below	31%	47
Receives regular telephone calls/emails/texts from home	30%	46
Unexplained changes or fluctuations in work performance	25%	39
Is withdrawn	20%	31
Wears clothing to 'cover up' bruising or injury	19%	29
Takes unusual amounts of time off sick	18%	28
Displays anxiety when leaving to go home	18%	28
Arrives late	16%	24

Colleagues' comments on the impact of victims in the workplace

"Creates additional stress within an already stressful environment"

"It creates concern and angst amongst colleagues"

"Heightened concern for her however she has been courageous enough to seek help and make change in her life"

"Very open re the attack - helpful for team to raise the issue"

"We have been sympathetic but get frustrated when she does not stick to her plans to have no more contact with him. Also has been given lots of time off to address issues so losing sympathy when she allows him into her home again"

"Concern for colleague is a stress factor in itself ie Worries if she is late in morning"

"The person overcompensates by proving to herself that she 'can do' everything by herself and that she 'is fine' - She stays late at work - makes sure nothing is ever left unfinished -Does not ask for her line manager's support. The person actually overworks to exhaust herself. She has expressed to me that work gives her a 'sense of achievement when she's no good at anything else'. The main affect of this is that she is seen to be a not very effective team member etc"

"She is concerned that her ex partner will contact her work base and expose this information to other team members or turn up at work and make a nuisance of himself. She does the very minimum to keep her job going and functions at well below par. Looks tired and drawn and can only talk with me about this"

DCC as Employer

Key findings:

- 61% (816) respondents knew that DCC had a DVA Employer Policy; 39% (515) did not.
- 21% (167) of those who knew of the Policy had read it; 57% (466) had not
- The majority of respondents felt that DCC should provide
 - Access to information about support services to victims (98%, 1305)
 - Access to someone to talk to confidentially within DCC independent of manager/directorate (96%, 1275)
 - Flexible working options (e.g. time off to visit solicitor/support service; flexible hours; advance pay for particular purpose; change role/venue to safeguard individual; keep phone number/address strictly confidential (95%, 1,273)
 - Posters and leaflets to raise awareness (91%, 1212)
 - Access to information about support services to perpetrators (91%, 1,209)
 - Opportunity to talk confidentially about their domestic abuse to their manager (75%, 1004)
 - Opportunity for staff to discuss abuse in supervision (63%, 840).

Respondents' comments about the DCC Policy:

"I was very impressed by this policy - it was very comprehensive and covered a number of areas that in general, are not perceived to be domestic violence"

"It is woefully lacking in support for those experiencing violence in same sex relationships"

"Needs more publicising, as a new member of DCC I found it on the intranet but none of the team I was in knew about it"

"Having recently been the HR adviser in a case that fell into some of these areas, the line manager felt that taking action to support an employee who had clearly demonstrated DV tendencies was intrusive because the police decided that criminal charges were not applicable"

"Not all staff have access to computers. It needs to be available in other formats as does this questionnaire and perhaps included with contracts"

"I think that it is excellent that managers have the responsibility to ensure that victims of Domestic Violence are supported and that difficult issues like attendance and lateness can be handled with sensitivity"

"It is a very difficult subject area. It needs to be addressed and people need to know that managers are qualified and you can talk to them. However, I think it is something that needs to come from the individual and managers need to be very cautious if they consider confronting staff. I think the policy is about right but I don't think it will cure a problem. Hopefully it will raise awareness and provide at least somebody some extra confidence".

Recommendations:

1. DCC DV Directorate Group representatives agree to display materials of support services (specify what and where) within their Directorates from 2008-9
2. DCC DV Directorate Group to review the introduction of the DVAC scheme (number of referrals, times spent by volunteers, outcomes) March 2009.
3. DCC DV Directorate representatives agree directorate funding of half-day and one-day managers training courses in 2008-9 (£4,086 total)
4. DCC Directorate representatives identify and prioritise managers and staff to receive specialist training in 2008 – 9 (half-day managers; one day managers; one day adva; one day risk-assessment; how perpetrators operate)
5. DCC Directorate representatives identify mechanisms to monitor numbers of domestic abuse cases amongst staff and to feed back to DCC DV Directorate Group
6. CYPS and ACS to write domestic abuse policies (Service Provider and Commissioner of Services) by September 2008
7. DCC DV Directorate Group to agree questions and timing of next staff survey late 2008, early 2009.
8. P&P to ensure appropriate links made between DV Employer Policy and associated DCC policies (Managing Attendance; Lone Worker; Wellbeing at Work; Counselling)
9. DCC DV Directorate Group to raise the awareness of 'zero tolerance' through internal Communications and external marketing.