The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022 will be signed into law shortly. This Bill provides for the introduction of new rights for employees which includes support for those who are victims of domestic violence. This Bill proposes to provide those who are enduring or at risk of domestic violence to five days of paid leave per year (rate has yet to be confirmed). This document will provide information to assist you if and when you need to support a colleague, friend or family member experiencing domestic violence.

This is the first statutory employment benefit when it comes to domestic violence. This new legislation has been well received by employers as physical and or sexual violence is unfortunately something that 1 in 4 women experience since the age of 15. Emotional abuse is also very prominent with 1 in 3 women experience emotional abuse from a partner or ex-partner *(Statistics from EU Fundamental Rights Agency Research 2014)*. These statistics are frightening so as an employer it is important that you know where to turn if and when you are faced with a colleague who is experiencing domestic violence.

It is vital that when speaking with someone who is experiencing domestic violence to actively listen, support and show empathy. Confidentiality and sensitivity are crucial, alongside ensuring no judgments are made. Having a toolkit to refer to with listed resources you can share with this individual will be hugely beneficial. Below is a list of Specialist Services and their contact details.

**How can you assist a person you suspect is experiencing Domestic Abuse?**

If you have something to offer this individual, it is safe to ask, and you are worried that this individual is being abused but they have not disclosed it to you, asking questions about domestic abuse support increases the likelihood of a disclosure. Asking an individual if they were experiencing abuse can be helpful as it can make the person feel supported and encouraged. If the person disclosed to you that they are experiencing domestic abuse, it is important that you respond effectively. Some recommended responses from Women’s aid are listed below:

* “Thank you for telling me this.”
* “What you are describing sounds like abuse.”
* “The abuse is not your fault.”
* “You have a right to live a life free of violence, abuse and fear.”
* “You have options, and we can help you find support.

ISME can provide further information around the principles of dealing with and responding to a person experiencing domestic violence. To speak with our HR Team, you can call 01- 6622755. As mentioned above, there are many Specialist Services available throughout Ireland dedicated to meeting the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence. Below are the contact details for some useful services.

* **Women’s Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline** - 1800 341 900

<https://www.womensaid.ie/services/helpline.html>

This is a free domestic violence and abuse helpline. They provide a listening ear, emotional support and practical information to women in the Republic of Ireland subjected to domestic violence. Women’s Aid provides one to one support and advocacy, court accompaniment, a domestic abuse information service in the Dublin Area.

* **Male Advice Line** - 1800 816 588

<https://mensnetwork.ie/male-advice-line/>

This service offers confidential advice and support to Male victims of domestic violence.

* **Safe Ireland & Still Here**

<http://www.safeireland.ie/> & <http://www.stillhere.ie/>

These sources provide interactive links to access information on the 39 specialist domestic violence and abuse services across Ireland. The services include listening and emotional support through helpline and face to face contact, information provision, advocacy & support groups.

* **LGBT Helpline** - 1800 929 539

<https://lgbt.ie/our-services/>

This is a national support service for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people and may be used to support victim/survivors of domestic violence and abuse in same sex relationships.