



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Easy-to-Read Guidelines for Employers

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WHY THIS MATTERS

Gender-based violence (GBV) includes domestic violence, sexual harassment, stalking, online abuse, and other forms of harmful behaviour directed at a person because of their gender.

Although violence often happens outside the workplace, it can have a major impact on employees and businesses. Victims may experience:

- Increased absenteeism
- Reduced productivity
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety, stress, or health problems
- Resignation or job loss

Employers who take action can create a safer workplace, support affected employees, reduce legal and reputational risks, and improve staff wellbeing and retention.



WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

GBV can take many forms, including:

Domestic or Intimate-Partner Violence

Abuse by a current or former partner, including:

- Physical violence
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial control

Sexual Violence

Any sexual act without consent, including:

- Sexual harassment
- Sexual assault
- Rape
- Sexual exploitation

Femicide - The killing of women or girls because of their gender.

Human Trafficking - The exploitation of people through coercion, threats or force, often for sexual purposes.

Harmful Practices

Practices such as:

- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Child marriage
- Forced marriage

Abuse of Authority (Sexual Blackmail)

When someone in a position of power seeks sexual favours in exchange for:

- Employment
- Promotion
- Salary increases
- Training opportunities

Online or Digital Violence

Abuse carried out using technology, including:

- Cyberbullying
- Online harassment
- Threats
- Doxing (sharing someone's personal information without consent)
- Sharing intimate images without consent
- Deepfake pornography

Stalking

Repeated unwanted behaviour such as:

- Constant calls or messages
- Following someone
- Monitoring their activities
- Sending threatening communications



RECOGNISING POSSIBLE SIGNS OF GBV

Employees may not disclose abuse because they are afraid, embarrassed, or unsure whether they will be supported. **Managers should not try to diagnose abuse but should be aware of changes in behaviour.**

Changes in Performance

- Decline in work quality
- Reduced participation in meetings
- Lack of engagement with colleagues
- Difficulty concentrating

Behavioural Changes

- Withdrawal from colleagues
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Loss of confidence
- Becoming easily upset or startled

Important: These signs do not prove that someone is experiencing GBV. Employers should focus on offering support, not making assumptions.

Attendance Issues

- Frequent lateness
- Leaving early
- Increased absences
- Working unusual hours without explanation

Physical Signs

- Extreme tiredness
- Changes in appearance
- Panic attacks
- Sleep or eating difficulties
- Substance misuse
- Self-harm indicators

KEY ACTIONS EMPLOYERS SHOULD TAKE



Review Workplace Policies

Ensure policies cover:

- Sexual harassment
- Gender-based violence
- Online abuse
- Digital GBV
- Misuse of technology



Create Safe Reporting Channels

Employees should have access to:

- Confidential reporting systems
- Multiple reporting options
- Clear reporting procedures



Appoint a Contact Person

Where possible, nominate someone responsible for:

- Receiving reports
- Guiding employees
- Coordinating support



Communicate Clearly

Inform all employees that:

- GBV is not tolerated
- Reporting mechanisms exist
- Support is available



Train Managers

Managers should understand:

- Different forms of GBV
- Warning signs
- Reporting procedures
- How to respond appropriately and sensitively

DEALING WITH GBV IN THE WORKPLACE

Employers should:

- Maintain a clear Code of Conduct
- Have a reporting policy for harassment and GBV
- Investigate complaints fairly and promptly
- Explain investigation procedures and timelines
- Protect confidentiality
- Provide support to victims
- Offer temporary workplace adjustments where needed
- Apply disciplinary measures where appropriate
- Promote a zero-tolerance culture
- Provide awareness and training programmes
- Foster a culture of respect, equality, and inclusion



WHEN THE PERPETRATOR IS NOT AN EMPLOYEE



Sometimes the person committing the abuse is a partner, former partner, family member, client, or another third party.

In these situations employers should:

- Listen and provide support
- Refer employees to specialist services
- Consider flexible working arrangements
- Prevent unauthorised individuals from entering the workplace
- Alert security staff where appropriate
- Monitor risks such as stalking or excessive unwanted contact
- Train managers to respond with empathy and confidentiality

DIGITAL GBV & DEEPFAKES

Digital technology is creating new risks.

These include:

- Deepfake pornography
- Online harassment
- AI-generated abusive content
- These include:
- Non-consensual sharing of images
- Cyberstalking



Employers should:

Update Policies

Explicitly include:

- Deepfakes
- Technology-facilitated abuse
- Online harassment

Train Staff

Managers should understand that:

- AI-generated harassment is real harassment
- Reports must be taken seriously
- Cases should be investigated promptly

Create AI Rules

Develop an AI Acceptable Use Policy that explains:

- What AI use is allowed
- What is prohibited
- Consequences for misuse

Preserve Evidence

Where necessary, establish processes to secure digital evidence for investigations.

Monitor Effectiveness

Regularly:

- Conduct anonymous staff surveys
- Track incident reports
- Review procedures and outcomes

SUPPORTING VICTIMS

Employees affected by GBV should be able to access support quickly.

Employers can:

- Provide information about support organisations
- Refer employees to specialist services
- Offer reasonable workplace adjustments
- Maintain confidentiality
- Treat all reports seriously

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers should be aware of relevant legislation, including:

- *Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Chapter 452)*
- *Violence and Harassment in the Work Environment provisions (Article 29A)*
- *Istanbul Convention*
- *EU Directive 2024/1385 on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*
- *EU Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC)*
- *EU Health and Safety Framework Directive (89/391/EEC)*

These laws reinforce the importance of maintaining a workplace free from violence, harassment, discrimination, and intimidation.

QUICK CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS

1. *Review policies on GBV and online abuse.*
2. *Appoint a GBV contact person.*
3. *Create confidential reporting channels.*
4. *Train managers and supervisors.*
5. *Promote a zero-tolerance culture.*
6. *Support victims quickly and sensitively.*
7. *Include digital GBV and deepfakes in policies.*
8. *Monitor the effectiveness of procedures.*
9. *Work with specialist support organisations.*
10. *Ensure compliance with legal obligations.*

KEY MESSAGE

Gender-based violence is not only a personal issue but also a workplace issue. Employers play a vital role in preventing abuse, supporting victims, creating a safe working environment, and fostering a culture of dignity, respect, and equality for all employees.



Strengthening
Employer Response
— to —
Gender Based Violence



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