

An Post Human Resources Directorate

# Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control Policy



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## Introduction

An Post acknowledges the severe impact that domestic abuse and coercive control can have on our employees and their families. Where it arises, the impact of domestic abuse and coercive control can carry over into the workplace. An Post also recognises that the workplace offers an essential safe space to access confidential, sensitive and meaningful supports for employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control. As outlined in this policy, An Post is fully committed to facilitating these supports for our employees.

### **The purpose of this policy is to:**

- Break the silence about domestic abuse and coercive control
- Assure all employees that the workplace is a safe environment to access help
- Assist employees in obtaining informed and meaningful supports as early as possible
- Confirm that all disclosures relating to domestic abuse and coercive control shall be managed in a sensitive manner
- Support the retention, safety and wellbeing of staff affected by domestic abuse and coercive control
- Promote a respectful and safe workplace environment that does not condone or excuse domestic abuse and coercive control.

An Post opposes all forms of violence, harassment and coercive control. This policy was drafted in consultation with LGBT Ireland, Men's Aid, Safe Ireland, Women's Aid and our trade union partners. It is aligned with our duty of care to our employees who have the right to work in an environment that is inclusive and supportive, and with our public sector duty to protect human rights, eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

### **This policy applies to all An Post employees.**

## Understanding Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control

An Post's definition of domestic abuse is aligned with the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

### **➤ What is Domestic Abuse?**

Domestic abuse refers to all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares, or has shared, the same residence with the target of the abuse.

Domestic abuse is a serious human rights issue and can occur irrespective of gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, race, religion or family situation.

Domestic abuse can take many forms manifesting as intimidation, coercion, threats, stalking, cyber harassment, degradation, isolation or deprivation of basic needs such

as food, clothing or heating. As a result, an individual experiencing domestic abuse may suffer from a range of conditions including physical injury, psychological trauma, lack of sleep, increased stress, anxiety, inability to concentrate, low self-esteem and varying states of depression.

### ➤ **What is Domestic Coercive Control?**

Domestic coercive control is a strategic course of oppressive conduct that is typically characterised by frequent physical abuse and sexual coercion in combination with tactics to intimidate, degrade, isolate and control individuals.

An Post recognises that domestic abuse isn't always physical. Coercive control is a persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by an abuser over a prolonged period of time, designed to achieve obedience and create fear. It may include threats, stalking, humiliation, isolation, degradation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten an individual. A controlling abuser may shut out an individual's friends and family, control their movements, micro-manage what they eat or wear, monitor them online via spyware, deprive them of support including medical services or restrict their access to money.

This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from supports, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive control is a criminal offence in Ireland as per section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018.

## **Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control as a Workplace Issue**

The effects of domestic abuse and coercive control do not subside during working hours. The consequences can seep into every part of a person's life, including work.

In the workplace domestic abuse and coercive control can impact productivity, morale, wellbeing, attendance and workplace relationships. It puts limitations on an employee's full and active participation at work.

Domestic abuse may also continue during work hours. While at work the employee may be upset or harassed by the perpetrator either turning up at their workplace or through the receipt of abusive phone calls, text messages or emails.

Colleagues may also be affected and face direct threats or intimidation. Colleagues may be aware that abuse is taking place but may not know how to help. The perpetrator may also be employed in the same workplace (Section "Disciplinary Issues" refers).

An Post will engage with employees who reach out to HR in need of guidance to address their abusive behaviour.

An Post understands the challenges to retaining employment while experiencing domestic abuse and the particular pressures to retain financial independence.

Early communication with the Company will prevent the impacted employee from being subjected to unwarranted disciplinary or discriminatory action and will facilitate swift access to meaningful supports. An Post will seek to support an employee experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control in retaining their employment to help ensure financial independence.

## Disciplinary Issues

If the perpetrator of domestic abuse is an employee of An Post and uses company property or company time to abuse, intimidate or harass an individual, the company's disciplinary procedures shall be instigated. This may lead to a disciplinary sanction up to and including dismissal.

In circumstances where both involved parties are employees of An Post and either party makes a workplace complaint, the company's dignity at work policy may be invoked.

An Post will not tolerate disrespectful behaviour in the workplace such as offensive jokes, aggressive or demeaning behaviour, or discrimination. Employees are expected to demonstrate behaviour that does not support or promote domestic abuse or coercive control.

Any threats to co-worker safety will be taken very seriously by the Company.

An Post acknowledges that domestic abuse and coercive control can lead to a criminal conviction as per the Domestic Violence Act 2018.

## Disclosing Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control

An Post is committed to maintaining a safe environment in which employees can comfortably discuss their concerns related to domestic abuse and coercive control. Correspondingly An Post is seeking to foster a positive partnership with all employees to raise awareness, eliminate stigma and reinforce safe channels of communication.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control are encouraged to seek support from our trained and trusted contacts across the Company whose details shall be regularly circulated in communications (Section "List of Supports" also refers).

An Post recognises that disclosure may not be a single event but a process that takes place over a series of encounters with our trained and trusted contacts. Employees experiencing domestic abuse will be given control of their disclosure process. Should an employee not wish to take action at the point of disclosure, this will be respected as much as possible.

The role of An Post's trusted internal contacts is not to address the domestic abuse and coercive control directly. Their remit of responsibility entails facilitating access to safe workplace supports and assisting employees in connecting with external specialised support organisations as per An Post's action framework outlined below.

## Domestic Abuse & Coercive Control Action Framework at An Post: The 3 R's

An Post upholds an action framework to support all employees facing domestic abuse and coercive control. It encompasses the following three key steps:

1. **Reassure** employees that the Company respects & values their right to dignity, safety and welfare
2. **Respond** appropriately to disclosure by providing supports
3. **Refer** employees experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control to the appropriate help

### ➤ REASSURE

Many employees may find the issue of domestic abuse in their own private life difficult to discuss. The first step in the An Post action framework addressing domestic abuse and coercive control highlights the Company's commitment to regularly reassuring all employees that the workplace is a safe place to get help.

The following assurances are to be clearly communicated to all employees who may be affected by domestic abuse and coercive control:

- An Post fully recognises that domestic abuse and coercive control can affect people of all genders, sexual orientations, ages and backgrounds.
- An Post will respond sensitively, sympathetically and in a non-judgemental manner to all employees who disclose that they are experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control.
- An Post acknowledges the employee's right to privacy.
- An Post will not ask the employee for proof to validate an initial disclosure of domestic abuse.
- An Post will respect the employee's boundaries.
- An Post acknowledges the right of staff to make their own decision on the course of action.
- When domestic abuse is disclosed, line managers will treat attendance issues related to domestic abuse and coercive control confidentially and with understanding.
- Regular reviews of Company policies and processes shall be undertaken in line with best practice and relevant legislation to ensure ongoing provision of a supportive workplace that can effectively respond to such disclosures.

### ➤ RESPOND

To ensure a safe working environment, An Post offers employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control a broad range of supports where available. These supports may include, but are not limited to:

- A designated contact for further information on Company policy & available supports with whom the individual feels comfortable
- Assistance developing a personal safety plan where appropriate

- A change in working hours and/or provision of flexible working as per the Company's flexible working arrangements
- A change of work phone number, mobile number or email address as appropriate
- Redeployment, relocation, remote working, return to the office (if working remotely) or change of specific duties e.g. to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role.
- Financial assistance upon request in the form of advances to salary
- Access to up to 2 weeks of special paid leave to facilitate legal meetings, court attendance or other occurrences related to domestic abuse and coercive control. This will be agreed on a case by case basis between the employee and local management following consultation with the Company Occupational Support Services.
- Support advising colleagues of the situation on a need-to-know basis and agreeing a response if the office receives inappropriate communications
- Provision of updated confirmation regarding workplace security protocols in place
- Maintaining of records of abuse in the workplace: An Post may put in place appropriate measures to maintain records of the perpetrator harassing or stalking the employee at work and make these records available to the employee should they need it in legal proceedings. This may include keeping a record of emails, texts, calls or CCTV footage.

While no evidence of domestic abuse and coercive control is required to make a disclosure of domestic abuse at An Post, special paid leave and the supports listed above may be accommodated subject to evidence being provided by the employee. In that regard the company may ask the employee to provide evidence in an agreed format from the employee's doctor, domestic abuse support service or the Gardaí. This will be agreed with the employee in advance and shall be addressed confidentially with all due sensitivity.

The Company also recognises that it may be appropriate to support an employee who is seeking help to address and stop their violent behaviour. In that regard, An Post will put the employee in contact with relevant support providers.

An Post is committed to nurturing the relationship that exists between the health, welfare and work of our employees and the Company promotes practical supports to sustain all aspects of wellbeing.

An Post's dedicated **Occupational Health and Support** team of qualified professionals provides enduring supports to An Post employees on both personal and workplace health issues, including mental health, trauma, bereavement, retirement and addiction. Employees can contact the OHS team directly or they can be referred by their manager or via Human Resources.

Complementing this service, An Post has launched an **Employee Assistance Programme** with a **dedicated 24/7 confidential helpline** offering wellbeing support, financial advice, legal assistance, counselling, life coaching, parent and carer coaching, health information and career guidance. This free service is available to An Post employees and their families with unlimited access every day of the year.

Contact details for the Occupational Health and Support team and the Employee Assistance Programme are outlined below under "List of Supports".

Both services are available to assist An Post employees who are experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control.

### ➤ REFER

Help is available. While actively assisting with the implementation of workplace safety measures and flexible accommodations, An Post will also assist in ensuring that employees are fully informed of the contact details of specialist third party organisations who are dedicated to supporting all individuals affected by domestic abuse and coercive control.

Where possible An Post will offer safe and private spaces on our premises for the employee to contact support services as needed. Upon request, An Post may make this referral on the employee's behalf as the individual may find it difficult to make multiple disclosures to different parties on a given day.

An Post recognises that not every person experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control will want to exit an abusive relationship. The Company therefore acknowledges that it is important to manage risks and ensure that as many safeguards are in place as possible.

The final section of this policy outlines a list of supportive organisations and services across Ireland that provide informed support and advice to individuals experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control.

## Confidentiality

All information regarding domestic abuse and coercive control will be treated as confidential and shall be strictly managed on a need-to-know basis. Employees who disclose that they are experiencing domestic abuse or coercive control can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

There are however exceptional circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured such as when there are safeguarding concerns about children, vulnerable adults or when An Post is required to act to protect the safety of employees. In such circumstances the applicable employee will be advised in advance where possible.

Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

## Communications & Ongoing Learning

An Post aims to raise awareness of this policy and of the impact of domestic abuse and coercive control with all managers and staff to fortify the supports extended to affected individuals. The Company will host regular awareness campaigns and circulate relevant learning resources through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisals, special events, leaflets and posters.



All managers shall be supported in undertaking the following:

- Reassuring employees that An Post seeks to support them
- Responding to disclosures in a sensitive and effective manner
- Signposting to specialist organisations and other recognised external sources of support
- Assisting with the implementation of agreed actions to support ongoing workplace safety planning with regard to domestic abuse and coercive control.

All managers are encouraged to make themselves aware of this policy and to commit to engaging with associated learning and development offerings.

## Monitoring

This policy has been agreed between the company and the staff trade unions on foot of consultation with key community partners and alignment with best practice guidelines.

The policy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Company in consultation with the trade unions to reflect developments in best practice and legislation.

## List of Supports

### An Post Internal Contact Details:

- |  |                 |   |
|--|-----------------|---|
| • HR Manager Corporate   | Ph. 01 705 7386 | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerCorporate@anpost.ie">HRManagerCorporate@anpost.ie</a> |
| • HR Manager Dublin  | Ph. 01 705 7193 | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerDublin@anpost.ie">HRManagerDublin@anpost.ie</a>       |
| • HR Manager North East & DMC  | Ph. 01 705 8767 | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerNE@anpost.ie">HRManagerNE@anpost.ie</a>               |
| • HR Manager North West & AMC  | Ph. 091 507339  | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerNW@anpost.ie">HRManagerNW@anpost.ie</a>               |
| • HR Manager South East & PMC  | Ph. 01 705 7193 | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerSE@anpost.ie">HRManagerSE@anpost.ie</a>               |
| • HR Manager South West  | Ph. 01 705 7193 | Email: <a href="mailto:HRManagerSW@anpost.ie">HRManagerSW@anpost.ie</a>               |
|  |                 |   |
| • Occupational Health & Support  | Ph. 01 705 7801 | Email: <a href="mailto:ohsreferrals@anpost.ie">ohsreferrals@anpost.ie</a>             |
| • Occupational Safety Advisors   | Ph. 01 705 8398 | Email: <a href="mailto:SafetyManager@anpost.ie">SafetyManager@anpost.ie</a>           |
|  |                 |   |
| • <b>An Post Employee Assistance Programme with Spectrum Life</b>                        |                 |   |
| Freephone: 1800 903 542  |                 |   |
| Website: <a href="https://anpost.spectrum.life/eap">https://anpost.spectrum.life/eap</a> |                 |   |
| Organisation Code: AnPost  |                 |   |

## External Support Services:

- An Garda Síochána  
Emergency Tel: 999/112  
Report/Advice: Contact a Local Garda Station  
Visit: [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)
- Women's Aid  
Freephone Number: 1800 341 900 (24-hour National Freephone Helpline)  
Visit: [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)  
Email: [helpline@womensaid.ie](mailto:helpline@womensaid.ie)
- Men's Aid  
Tel: 01 554 3811 (Dedicated Support Service for Male Victims)  
Visit: [www.mensaid.ie](http://www.mensaid.ie)  
Email: [hello@mensaid.ie](mailto:hello@mensaid.ie)
- Men's Development Network & Male Advice Line  
Freephone Number: 1800 816 588 (Male Victims National Helpline)  
Visit: [www.mensnetwork.ie](http://www.mensnetwork.ie)  
Email: [men@mensnetwork.ie](mailto:men@mensnetwork.ie)
- Safe Ireland  
Tel: 090 6479078  
Visit: [www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)  
Email: [info@safeireland.ie](mailto:info@safeireland.ie)
- LGBT Helpline  
Tel: 1890 929 539  
Visit: [www.lgbt.ie](http://www.lgbt.ie)  
Email: [info@lgbt.ie](mailto:info@lgbt.ie)
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland  
Tel: 01 873 35 75  
Visit Website: [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)
- Gay Switchboard Ireland  
Tel: 01 872 1055  
Visit Website: <http://www.gayswitchboard.ie>
- Rape Crisis Help  
Freephone Number: 1800 778888  
Visit: [www.rapecrisishelp.ie](http://www.rapecrisishelp.ie)  
Email: [info@rcc.ie](mailto:info@rcc.ie)
- MOVE - Men Overcoming Violent Emotions  
Tel: 065 684 8689  
Visit: <https://www.moveireland.ie/>  
Email: [move@moveireland.ie](mailto:move@moveireland.ie)

- Samaritans  
Tel: 116 123 (24-hour Helpline)  
Visit: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
Email: [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)
- BelongTo  
Tel: 01 670 6223 (Supporting LGBT young people in Ireland)  
Visit: [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)  
Email: [info@belongto.ie](mailto:info@belongto.ie)

## Where to get Legal Advice

- Legal Aid Board  
Tel: 066 947 1000 or 1890 615 200  
Visit: [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)  
Email: [info@legalaidboard.ie](mailto:info@legalaidboard.ie)
- Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)  
Tel: 1890 350 250 or 01 8745690  
Visit: [www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)
- Courts - Family Law  
Visit: [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie) for local court contact details