

# Domestic violence & abuse policy for the Civil Service launched

## ANDY PRENDERGAST

**A new policy for over 47,000 civil servants, setting out statutory entitlements to domestic violence leave and other employment supports, was launched by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe this week.**

Speaking at the launch on Monday of this week, Minister Donohoe said: “We must recognise that the workplace may be somewhere a victim has distance from an abuser and therefore employers are in a prime position to provide workplace supports and guidance toward specialist services.”

“It is in this context that the Civil Service has developed this important policy which underscores its commitment to supporting staff and colleagues impacted by domestic violence and abuse.”

Sarah Benson, CEO of Women’s Aid, said: “We know that employers who implement policies and procedures for employees subjected to domestic abuse can help to reduce the risk of victims/survivors giving up work, increase financial security and also increase feelings of solidarity and support at a time when victims/survivors may feel completely isolated and alone.

“Women’s Aid looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department and the Minister to support the implementation of this excellent initiative.”

Mary Connaughton, CIPD Ireland Director, also welcomed the new Civil Service policy, encouraging other organisations “to take the opportunity to develop a policy now.”

Ms Connaughton said: “It’s important that employers and managers become familiar with how to manage situations where the domestic violence policy might apply, and realise that they are there to support the employee, not resolve the situation. This support, and paid time off, can help to reduce the risk of victims/survivors giving up work, and then having to face financial worries at a time when they may already feel isolated and alone.”

The policy will be accompanied by a more detailed guide for Civil Service employers, as well as a programme of training and awareness. The 2023 Work Life Balance Act Miscellaneous Provisions Act introduced five days of annual domestic violence leave, but the provision has yet to be commenced.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The new policy sets out in detail the role of HR in carrying out the provisions of the policy. It also outlines how to spot signs of abuse and how to respond to abuse situations.

The policy also acknowledges that staff members “can also be alleged perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse” and that the Civil Service “will hold alleged perpetrators accountable for incidents of domestic violence and abuse committed in the workplace, during work hours or through work equipment.”

In such cases, disciplinary procedures may be invoked with potential sanctions up to and including dismissal, in accordance with the Disciplinary Code.

Staff members “who knowingly facilitate abuse, for example, by providing the alleged perpetrator with access to equipment or information on the victim or survivor such as contact details, location or shift patterns, will also be subject to disciplinary procedures.”