



Executive Summary

**Learnings from Vodafone's
Global Policy on Domestic
Violence and Abuse**

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About Vodafone Foundation

Vodafone Foundation (UK registered charity number 1089625) combines Vodafone's charitable giving and technology to address some of the world's most pressing problems. Through a strategy of 'Connecting for Good', the Foundation invests in programmes that support communities in countries where Vodafone has commercial roots and that use technology to deliver significant public benefit.

The Foundation allocates Vodafone Group Plc funds to projects delivered in partnership with other charitable organisations & NGOs. Vodafone Group Foundation sits at the centre of 27 local social investment programmes, referred to as the local foundations. Together, the Vodafone Foundations are one of the world's largest corporate funding networks.

For more information visit www.vodafonefoundation.org

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Vodafone Foundation has been working to address domestic abuse for over ten years, and we funded this research to understand the impact of this work in the context of Vodafone's global HR policy. We also know that many companies want to do more to support their employees, so by sharing our learnings, we hope they will benefit too.”

Andrew Dunnett, Group Director, SDGs, Sustainable Business & Foundations

Introduction

In 2019, Vodafone launched the first global domestic violence policy, which set out a comprehensive range of workplace supports, security and other measures for employees at risk of, experiencing, and recovering from, domestic violence and abuse.

This global policy built on over a decade of work by Vodafone Foundation, Vodafone's charitable arm, using technology to connect over one million people to information, advice and support through a portfolio of 'Apps against Abuse', the reach of which continues to grow across the company's global footprint.

Almost a year after Vodafone launched the HR policy, the outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions to prevent its spread saw the majority of the company's global employee base shift to home working in spring 2020. At the same time, reports of domestic violence intensified worldwide, with UN Women citing security, health and money worries, isolation with abusers and movement restrictions as the key exacerbating factors.

The severity of the situation was reflected by a surge in users of Vodafone Foundation's technology to support those in abusive relationships; downloads of the Bright Sky app increased by up to 75% weekly, and calls to Vodacom Foundation's Gender Based Violence Command Centre in South Africa increased by 65%.

In this context, Vodafone Foundation commissioned research to review progress on the implementation of the domestic violence and abuse policy across Vodafone markets, drawing on learning, promising practices, and particularly the new challenges and risks in the changing world of work brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This summary highlights the key learnings from this research, and identifies ways that both Vodafone and other companies can continue to build tools, awareness and leadership strategies to help ensure the safety of their employees globally through these unprecedented times.

Research Methodology

The research was carried out during October and November 2020. An online survey was completed by HR policy leads on domestic violence from 25 Vodafone markets. This was supplemented by interviews with senior leaders, HR and line managers. From this, ten country case studies were drawn up, showing the different ways that markets have implemented the policy through training, awareness raising, support and security measures for survivors. Interviews with HR and line managers in nine markets formed the basis of a further eleven case studies. These examples of support provided to survivors of domestic violence and abuse illustrate the different types of support provided.

Key Learning & Insights

1 The policy, associated guidance and communications provide a standard that has been adopted in all of Vodafone's markets.

The progress made to implement the policy has been impressive in a short space of time. All 27 markets reviewed had implemented a policy based on the global standard, sometimes going beyond it. The policy provides for a range of supports, including ten days of paid 'safe' leave and safety protection in the world of work. There has been significant progress in terms of employee awareness about the policy, training for managers and HR in supporting employees, and the process whereby line managers are supported by HR.

Real value can also be seen from the inclusive scope and definition of domestic violence and abuse, to include understanding of power and control, psychological abuse, coercive control and economic abuse. This has helped to ensure awareness of support goes beyond physical domestic violence, recognising the interconnection with the different forms of power, control and abuse.

2 Leadership and advocacy create a workplace of inclusion, equality and trust.

Vodafone's senior leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to ending domestic violence and abuse, sending an important message throughout the organisation about the seriousness with which it addresses the issue for all employees.

One of the strengths of the policy is that leaders in Vodafone want to see it embedded in a way that every employee is aware of its existence, and in turn, can find the right support from their manager. This has helped to create a work environment where managers are passionate about the issue and where they have a great deal of pride in the policy.

Vodafone's Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy in practice:

95%

95% of markets stated that the policy had been either **extremely or very important** to enable them to support employees affected by domestic violence and abuse

80%+

80%+ markets had completed or had plans for ongoing training with line managers and HR

The most frequent form of support provided:

68%

68% of markets had referred survivors to an Employee Assistance Programme for counselling and advice

64%

64% of markets had provided survivors with paid 'safe' leave

55%

55% of markets had either referred a survivor to a specialist domestic violence organisation, provided flexible working hours or adjusted workload

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Inclusion for All is core to Vodafone's purpose and part of this is ensuring no one is left behind. We also strive to create a culture where everyone can belong. We know from our research that survivors of domestic abuse experience a significant impact on their lives and their ability to fulfil their potential at work. It's important that Vodafone is a safe place and offers a supportive environment for survivors; from supporting their safety through to economic empowerment.

Of personal importance to me is how our support, through our policy and technology, positively impacts survivors' lives. When I listen to survivors' stories and the impact of support, this speaks to the heart of our purpose and I hope as a global employer we are playing our part in helping to end domestic violence and abuse.”

Leanne Wood, Chief Human Resources Officer, Vodafone Group

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This is a call to us to play a role in society for a just cause.”

Matimba Mbungela, Chief Human Resources Officer, Vodacom Group, South Africa

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[Domestic violence] is such a hidden issue in society. We are a very purposeful company and a family brand, and it is an important part of our inclusion for all pillar.”

Anne O'Leary, CEO, Vodafone Ireland

3 Line managers feel empowered to support survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Overall, 95% of respondents to the survey said that having the policy has been extremely or very important for them in supporting survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

The impact of this was particularly significant in markets where there is little in the way of domestic violence or legal support for survivors, and where rates of domestic violence are high.

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Having a policy to support our employees gives people confidence to talk to managers, who can be supported by HR.”

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With domestic violence rising, we can do something to build the trust between the employee, the management and the organisation.”

“

Thanks to the policy we can help to change the culture around [domestic violence].”

Quotes from Vodafone line managers, various markets

4 COVID-19 created unprecedented challenges – policy adaptation was critical in ensuring line managers had the tools to recognise, respond and refer in a remote working environment.

Reports of increasing rates of domestic violence and risks for employees confined at home with abusers during remote working posed significant challenges for Vodafone's line managers. With the formal workplace no longer available as a place of safety for a survivor, it has been harder to provide respite from abuse and offer support and information during working hours.

Of particular concern to Vodafone was to find sensitive and effective ways to support employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse, as the majority of employees across the world shifted to remote working at the onset of the pandemic. This pattern reflects a dramatically changing world of work, one that is likely to continue well beyond the pandemic.

For these reasons Vodafone reviewed its guidance for line managers and developed innovative ways to reach out to survivors who may be confined with an abusive partner at home. Building

on the policy and the model of support, Vodafone took early steps to ensure that managers were equipped with tools and awareness to recognise the problem and respond appropriately so that they could continue to support team members remotely.

Briefings for line managers, podcasts and an updated Vodafone Domestic Violence and Abuse Toolkit have all helped managers to maintain regular communications, provide survivors with access to information about specialist legal and domestic violence services, give support with safety measures and contact to the emergency services. An example of this is providing access to the office to those who cannot work safely at home.

5 Training has been crucial to policy implementation, ensuring line managers provide a front line of support for survivors.

Training has been mandatory for HR and line managers in many of Vodafone's markets and has been crucial to successful policy implementation. Over 80% of markets have carried out training for all HR, current and new line managers. The development and delivery of training has been carried out in partnership with domestic violence organisations locally, helping to build internal capacity for HR teams to carry out training. Training has been updated regularly through webinars or other communications to help line managers provide support to survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training has had a powerful effect on many line managers; some have gone onto support survivors in their teams, and others played a wider advocacy role in the community and in supporting friends and family members who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Training has also been critical in helping line managers to understand domestic violence and abuse in all of its forms, including the impact of power and control, coercive control and economic abuse. Important to this has been the development of skills in recognising the signs of domestic violence and abuse, knowing how to respond in empathetic and non-judgemental ways, and how to refer to specialist services, where this is relevant.

While the COVID-19 pandemic put many plans for in-person training sessions on hold, innovative ways have been found to continue to raise awareness about domestic violence and abuse, and implement support and safety measures during remote working. Online training, live and recorded webinars, along with podcasts and digital information packs have been widely used to continue this focus. In the future, training and guidance could also include dissemination and knowledge of Vodafone Foundation's 'Apps against Abuse' in live markets so that they can be used as a resource by employees.

6 As well as the actual provisions of the policy, its symbolic value cannot be underestimated in naming the problem of domestic violence and abuse, and building trust and awareness amongst employees.

An important finding from the research is the symbolic value of the policy for Vodafone's line managers and employees. The visibility given to the issue through regular internal and external communications has helped to name a problem that is surrounded in silence and stigma, with profound effects and opening up new spaces for people to talk about domestic violence and abuse.

One survivor interviewed spoke about the personal value of the policy, enabling her to realise that her experience of domestic abuse was legitimate and that she could take steps to change her situation. Line managers also spoke about the importance of the policy for their team members - without the policy, and trust in it, none of their employees would have come forward for support.

For this reason, awareness about the policy, and more widely that what someone may be experiencing is domestic violence and abuse, is crucial to its take up. Employees need to trust in and understand the policy, otherwise they will remain silent.

7 Survivors have been offered a variety of workplace supports and security measures without compromising their work or stability.

Survivors have been supported in a range of ways through practical workplace supports, including ten days of paid domestic violence leave and rearrangement of work tasks. Security measures have also been important for survivors at risk of assault or stalking.

In relation to the provision of support services, responses to the survey from Vodafone's markets show referral to an employment assistance programme (EAP) for counselling to be the most common form of support for employees. In some cases, this was organised through a dedicated domestic violence support line.

The second most important source of support has been the provision of paid 'safe' leave of up to ten days a year for survivors, the take up of which ranged between three and ten days. This has enabled survivors to attend court or police appointments, counselling (and take the time to heal following counselling), or move home. One market extended paid leave to 15 days per year as part of a collective agreement on smart working, recognising that additional days may be needed. Another regular form of support was to refer a survivor to a domestic violence support

service for legal advice, counselling, housing and other support. Some markets also developed a dedicated text and email service for employees to access confidential support and advice.

Workplace safety and security measures reported in the survey found that security supports included giving advice about personal safety (at work, commuting, and at home); providing safe car parking spaces following threats of assault or stalking at work; alerting relevant safety teams if a survivor was concerned about risks to their safety at work; and drawing up a risk assessment and safety plan with survivors as needed.

8 Awareness of intersectionality is crucial in ensuring effective and inclusive support for employees facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

The policy is embedded in an inclusive approach that recognises the support and security needs of employees affected by domestic violence and abuse. Vodafone continues to raise awareness by leveraging an intersectional approach, for example with a dedicated global training webinar held during Pride Week 2020 to raise awareness of the issue amongst LGBTI+ people.

Vodafone is extending this awareness and understanding about the inclusion of racial and ethnic minority women, employees living with disabilities, and older employees, amongst others, to ensure an inclusive response that supports all employees facing domestic violence and abuse.

9 Partnerships with domestic violence and abuse organisations enable survivors to access specialist support and help improve manager training.

Some Vodafone markets have developed extremely successful and beneficial partnerships with local and national domestic violence and abuse organisations. These were linked to the development and promotion of Vodafone Foundation's 'Apps against Abuse' and their wider support for domestic violence help-lines in several markets.

These partnerships have helped to streamline referrals to specialist domestic violence organisations, for counselling, legal, housing and other support; for expertise in training line managers and HR; and to participate in and support campaigns and awareness raising in the wider community.

10 Long term, Vodafone can play a key role in preventing domestic violence and abuse, through policy and wider advocacy.

Vodafone's leadership is critical for moving towards a transformational approach that works to prevent the root causes of domestic violence and abuse. This could take a three-pronged approach:

1. Support behaviour change by holding perpetrators accountable in appropriate ways and drawing on evidence and best practices regarding perpetrator counselling and treatment programmes;
2. Increase focus on working with men as advocates to end domestic violence and abuse (building on learnings from Vodacom South Africa's 'Say No to Gender-Based Violence' campaign);
3. Explore prevention by working with children and young people to promote respectful relationships. This could also work to address cyber harassment in social media amongst young people.

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I'd love to see education for the upcoming young generation, so that they know and understand what domestic violence means... so that they can know that what you are going through is abuse, that they need to find someone and get support. This means driving awareness about domestic violence... and that this is what we can do, and we can make a difference.”

Patricia Obo-Nai, CEO, Vodafone Ghana

Case Studies



Examples of support provided by Vodafone's line managers to employee survivors of domestic violence and abuse:

A Vodafone employee who had experienced stalking, abusive text messages and phone calls from her ex-partner sought help from her line manager. She wanted to work from the office because it was safe, thanks to the high level of security in the building.

Her line manager supported her to manage the abusive text messages and phone calls, recommending that she save them in case they were needed as evidence in court. Her manager also let her know that other supports were available under the policy, such as free counselling through the EAP, and paid leave, should she need it.

During the first lockdown in spring 2020, one of Vodafone's employees was working remotely and experienced violence and abuse from her partner. She needed to get out of the abusive situation and called her HR department for help. They linked her to the Security Department for a permit to travel during lockdown restrictions. The Security Team was aware of the policy and the protocols which sets out an explicit role to ensure the safety of survivors of domestic violence.

The woman received regular support from HR and her line manager, and took ten days of paid leave to move and settle into her new location and remote working environment.



Example of a Vodafone employee survivor's story:

An employee working for Vodafone had been living in an abusive relationship for many years, and recently separated from her husband.

For her, the policy had an important symbolic value, helping her to find the language to describe her experience and articulate what was happening to her. When she spoke to her HR business partner about the situation, they were supportive, referring her to counselling through the EAP. She also started reading about domestic abuse and downloaded Vodafone Foundation's Bright Sky app for information and advice. She was supported by family members and looked for professional help, all of which enabled her to have the confidence to take the steps to end the relationship.

She is proud to work for an employer that has taken a stand against domestic violence, and believes that she may not have had the strength to end the relationship if it had not been for Vodafone's policy.

Conclusion

Vodafone's policy on domestic violence and abuse is beginning to have a real impact on the lives of survivors of domestic violence and abuse who work for Vodafone. Vodafone's senior leaders and line managers are committed to, and take great pride in the policy and there is an ownership and passion about the policy that has driven its implementation.

While there are challenges and further steps to take, it has been a remarkable journey of commitment, inclusion and purpose. It is hoped that this summary can provide guidance for more companies, including across Vodafone, to support their employees and play a part in ending domestic violence and abuse.

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We're committed to doing our part to support survivors and end gender-based violence. We do this by continuing our work internally to embed a system of support around survivors- the policy, training for managers and HR teams and leadership advocacy. By continuing to share our learnings and the toolkit we can help other employers support survivors in the workplace. Looking to the future, a focus on prevention is key to ending domestic violence and abuse. Starting early with preventative education to ensure harmful gender norms are eliminated means we start to get to some of the root cause of domestic violence and abuse.”

Leanne Wood, Chief Human Resources
Officer, Vodafone Group

To find out more visit

vodafone.com/domestic-violence-and-abuse



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