

PPG ARTICLE ON TALK BY LUCY WHITTAKER ON DOMESTIC ABUSE 11 MARCH 2020 FOR THE WEBSITE

Lucy Whittaker from Alpha Vesta gave a talk entitled 'Bridging the Gap' on her work with Alpha Vesta, who raise awareness of the important role businesses and organisations can play in the Workplace of tackling Domestic Abuse. She is the founding Director and Lead Trainer and the company was founded by her in 2019. This talk was held on 11 March 2020 at the Patient Participation Group AGM.

Alpha Vesta believe that a preventative rather than a reactive approach needs to be directed towards those people that are coming into contact with potential victims and perpetrators of abuse every day and they don't even know it. There is a need for greater awareness, understanding and preventative work across communities in order to recognise and respond to the early signs of abuse before the full impact or an escalation occurs. There is an important role in the workplace in fostering awareness, training, understanding and support as well as increasing safety and well-being within the workplace and into the community.

The foundation and Mission Statement of Alpha Vesta is to break the cycle of domestic abuse through awareness, prevention and effective and safe early intervention through the workplace, by creating awareness, delivering talks and presentations, providing training and consultancy and conducting research.

Bridging the Gap is the title of the domestic abuse, awareness and training for workplaces, businesses and organisations. The aim is to engage with lots of different workplaces across the county in order to equip employers and employees with robust skills in recognising and responding safely and effectively to disclosures and suspected cases of domestic abuse within their workforce and those they come into contact with through their work. The project includes a **fully funded training workshop** for businesses or organisations keen to learn and understand more.

What is Domestic Abuse, Why Domestic Abuse is so complex, and the impact of Domestic Abuse across communities. The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. Abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and economic and emotional abuse.

Prior to the mid-1800s most legal systems viewed wife beating as a valid exercise of a husband's authority over his wife. In most legal systems around the world, domestic violence has been addressed only from the 1990s onward; indeed, before that time and in most countries, there was very little protection, in law or in practice against domestic violence.

One in four women and one in six women will be affected by domestic abuse at some point during their adult lifetime. One third of all violent crime in Essex is domestic related. Figures show police recorded an average of one incident of domestic abuse per minute in the year ending March 2019. There were 1.32 million domestic abuse related incidents recorded by police.

Intimate terrorism involves a pattern of violent coercive control in which one party uses a variety of violent and non-violent tactics to try to take complete control over their victim. This type of abuse occurs mainly in heterosexual relationships and is mainly perpetrated by men.

Situational violence occurs because of conflict which turns into arguments that can escalate into emotional and possibly physical violence. It can often involve both partners and women are just as likely as men to engage in situational violence. It follows a socio-economic gradient being more prevalent in poorer families. Substance misuse, anger management issues and communication issues often lie at the root.

In the Home Office report of January 2019, the national cost of domestic abuse was around £66 billion per year, and of the unit cost of a domestic abuse victim, which was calculated at nearly £35,000, only £5 was allocated to preventative work.

A recent analysis released by Trust for London and the Henry Smith Charity, placed the costs of domestic abuse to the public purse across in the following key areas: physical and mental health costs, criminal justice costs, social services costs, housing and refuge costs, civil legal costs and lost economic output.

More than 500,000 working women in the UK have experienced domestic violence and abuse in the past 12 months. £316m in economic output is lost by UK businesses each year as a result of work absences related to domestic abuse. The potential loss of earnings per woman in the UK as a result of abuse having negative impacts on career progression is estimated to be £5,800 each year.

75% of people experiencing domestic abuse will be targeted at their place of work because the abuser knows they will be there. 21% of people experiencing domestic abuse will take time off work as a direct result of abuse due to Court hearings, concerns about their children.

CPD Accredited Training

Part 1:

- Understanding what domestic abuse is
- How domestic abuse manifests and takes hold
- Understanding the law and barriers for both victims and perpetrators of abuse
- The impact of domestic abuse nationally and regionally

Part 2:

- Recognising the signs of domestic abuse in the community
- Recognising the signs of domestic abuse in the workplace
- Case studies

Part 3:

- Impact of domestic abuse on children
- Complexity of additional challenges facing both victims and perpetrators

Part 4:

- Domestic abuse as a safeguarding concern
- Building a robust policy and procedures within the workplace
- Signposting and referrals

Alpha Vesta have been funded by the PFCC (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex) to run a 6 month pilot project 'Bridging the Gap' beginning in January 2020 and are looking for businesses and organisations to take part in the pilot project where all of Alpha Vesta's services will be provided free of charge. To obtain more information you can contact Alpha Vesta by email at enquiries@alphavesta.com or call them on 01245 791281.

Alpha Vesta have also transferred their presentations, awareness sessions and workshops to online platforms so they can continue to reach people during this difficult time and when domestic abuse cases are rising. Their website has a downloadable article on it and anyone can email them to join an awareness session or workshop to be more aware across their community and in their workplace during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Currently they are running free one hour awareness sessions called 'Domestic Abuse and Coronavirus - The Toxic Mix' using the online platform, Zoom. More workshops being launched next week!

This is the link to their brand new Eventbrite page!
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/alpha-vesta-cic-30277303852>