

Talking to your employer

Trying to hold down a job whilst leaving a situation of domestic violence and abuse is very difficult. It is not realistic to consider changing your employer, but going to a known place of work does put you at risk. If you are working, and cannot combine leaving the home with a change of employer, the following tips are guidance that might help you.

Remember – Although your rights as an employee are stronger after you have been in a job for over two years, employers still have a duty of care to you. More importantly, most people – not just employers – will often be supportive and helpful once they know the circumstances and are in a position to offer some kind of help.

If you do not have a good relationship with your employer, then these points may not be useful. However, if you do think your employer is likely to be decent and sympathetic to your situation, these points may give you some ideas on how to speak to them.

The first thing to do is to actually talk to your employer. By law, an employer must make reasonable accommodation for any personal requests. They may also actually have a policy in place for circumstances like this. The last thing most employers want is an incident that could put anyone in danger, or leave them liable for anything. Anything that happens on their premises can lead to this, so it is in their benefit to be helpful.

Employers can raise the issue with local police, meaning that their address can be flagged as one that will need an immediate priority response.

Employers can change your hours so that it becomes very difficult for your partner to contact them.

Employers may be able to change your role so it is not public-facing, or alternatively move the site you work at.

Explain the situation to your payroll department. They will need to start paying

money into your new bank account, or at least not into the old one. They often have some rigid processes here, but discuss it with them and see what way they can work around any issues about payments.

If you are part of a union, you should speak to their union rep. Unions can often help in discussion with an employer, especially for sensitive situations like this, and may also offer legal advice.

If your payslips are being sent home, see if you can collect them in person or have them redirected. Again, an employer won't want to be held liable if their lack of co-operation causes harm to an employee.

You may want to ask an employer for unpaid leave for a while. This will give you time to cut ties and get settled, but ensures that you have a job to return to.