



TRENDS REPORT

DOMESTIC ABUSE & EMPLOYER INITIATIVES.

WHY & HOW TO MAKE IMPACT

UXCGROUP - PSYCHOLOGY

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving organisational landscape, employers are increasingly recognising the imperative to address issues that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of their operations. One such issue that has gained significant prominence is domestic abuse (DA). It is no longer confined to the private sphere; its impact reaches into the workplace, affecting employees and their employing organisations alike.

This report delves into the growing trend of organisations in the UK health and business insurance sector taking proactive measures to combat domestic abuse and support their employees through challenging times and towards recovery.

The DA Paradigm Shift

Historically, domestic abuse has been considered a personal matter, often hidden behind closed doors. However, society is undergoing a paradigm shift in its approach to this issue. Organisations are stepping up to address DA as a critical workplace concern. The reasons behind this shift are multifaceted. From meeting government expectations to creating safer, more compassionate work environments, businesses are taking meaningful steps to address DA head-on. Consequently, there is increasing momentum and pressure in the sector to take such steps, with staff need set to expand at pace.

The Human and Business Impact

Domestic abuse has profound consequences, not only on the victims but also on the employers and workplaces that surround them. It manifests in various forms, including absenteeism, presenteeism, and increased employee turnover. These challenges disrupt business operations and can negatively impact employee well-being and productivity.

The Role of Workplace Health Providers

Recognising their unique position in the lives of their employees, employers are now actively taking on the role of supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse. They are implementing policies, providing resources, and fostering a culture of empathy and understanding. As the workplace evolves with the rise of hybrid and remote work arrangements, businesses are adapting their strategies to meet the changing dynamics of DA. These ambitions face the challenge of providing choice to those in need, recognising the challenge inherent to DA victims – to disclose.

The sector is in need of self-refer, self-management options that provide privacy and evidence-based support – matching the offers that have emerged across the mental health landscape.

A Sector Solution – GOGL

This report also introduces "Get Out Get Love" (GOGL), a pioneering digital programme developed to support adults in their journey to recover from domestic abuse. GOGL offers a transformative solution to aid those affected by DA, one that has the potential to support a larger market of people in need than existing support options.

As we explore the trends, challenges, and opportunities in the realm of domestic abuse strategies within the UK health and business insurance sector, we invite you to join us on this journey of discovery. Together, we can pave the way for a future where organisations not only thrive but also play a pivotal role in supporting individuals to break free from the shackles of domestic abuse and to benefit from the recovery journey available.

Increase in Organisations Creating a DA Policy

The trend towards implementing workplace domestic abuse policies is at pace and gaining momentum. This is for a triad of reasons, including the welfare of employees paired with the welfare responsibilities of employers, the impact of DA on employees and their careers and the impact on employing organisations – making this a shared problem and an opportunity for unique access to support, in the workplace.

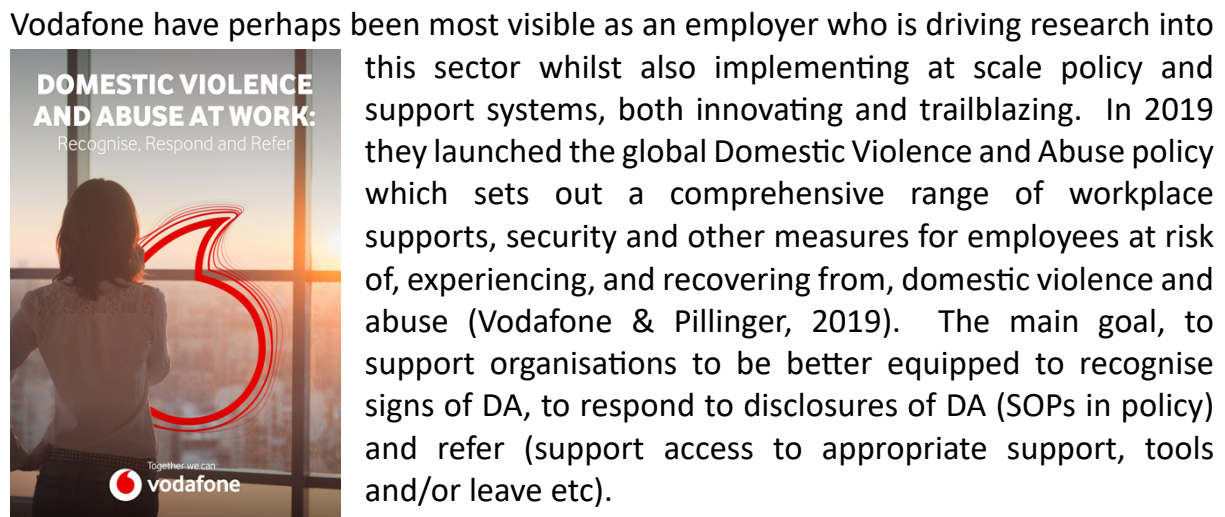
The employment sector has shown an increasing interest in the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace and the role employers can take in tackling this. The Trade Union Congress (2014) provided a report on the impact of domestic violence in the workplace and subsequently there has been engagement across the sector to further both the understanding of the impact and the strategies for supporting employees. This includes a KPMG report commissioned by Vodafone in 2019, which galvanised both the ideas that DA creates negative workplace impact and there is a need to address this as employers, at an international scale (KPMG LLP, 2019).



This has extended to include a UK government report in 2021, examining the role of workplace support – with a summary of proposed workplace support offers and the legal rights framework for DA victims and survivors. They provide a summary of the employer’s duty of care, in respect to employees experiencing DA:

Employers have a broad duty of care to their employees, which means that they should take all steps which are reasonably possible to ensure their health, safety and welfare. Legally, this means that they need to abide by relevant health and safety and employment law, as well as the common law duty of care. An employer’s duty of care may include protecting employees from wrongful acts of co-workers and third parties. As set out in this report, there are also economic, moral and ethical reasons why employers should act.

The call to action is becoming more formalised across the sector, with Ireland witnessing the arrival of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act in 2022, providing 10 days of leave as a legal right to those experiencing DA (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2022). There are calls for the same in the UK, with a number of organisations already embedding this as a component of their DA support policy.



Vodafone have perhaps been most visible as an employer who is driving research into this sector whilst also implementing at scale policy and support systems, both innovating and trailblazing. In 2019 they launched the global Domestic Violence and Abuse policy which sets out a comprehensive range of workplace supports, security and other measures for employees at risk of, experiencing, and recovering from, domestic violence and abuse (Vodafone & Pillinger, 2019). The main goal, to support organisations to be better equipped to recognise signs of DA, to respond to disclosures of DA (SOPs in policy) and refer (support access to appropriate support, tools and/or leave etc).

This is alongside additional investment and innovation into workplace support, including an App to support the logging of DA incidents without the risk of being discovered (the Bright Sky App).

Vodafone are visibly sector leaders in this space, reflecting over a decade of research and development – but there are others showing similar concern and investment in change. L’Oreal launched their own position on DA support policies with the header:

“Companies are the only places where the victims of domestic violence can speak freely”

This echoes a similar sentiment shown in Vodafone’s research – where the ability to talk privately and to access technology is safer, at work.

L’Oreal (2023) report their own involvement in DA research alongside Kering, BNP Paribas, OuiCare, Carrefour and Korian (across 6 countries) – with learning directing organisational policy change. As recently as September 2023, Kellogg’s launched it’s own policy of DA support including additional leave, financial support payments, support in funding a new bank account set up, counselling and flexible working (ITV, 2023). Recent articles in ‘HR magazine’ discuss the responsibilities of employers (Gallacher, 2020; Williams, 2022), whilst other publishers such as Cosmopolitan celebrate organisations who are taking such action (Biggs, 2023).

There is a definite trend, being led by multiple stakeholders and embraced by numerous high profile employers. This trend is heading towards formal legislation, whilst the effects of not supporting employees in need is becoming increasingly understood and demonstrated as a valid business responsibility.

Reasons for Employers Developing DA Policies

As early as 2014 the Trade Union Congress (2014) reported on the impact of DA in the workplace after a survey research project with 3,423 people in work. The results were striking.

Over 40% reported experiencing domestic violence. Of those who had experienced it themselves, over 40% stated that it had affected their ability to work. For 12% of those who had experienced DA, they described how this had continued even when they were in the workplace – through abusive emails or calls. For some, this includes sabotaged efforts to work well and restricted access to work at times (forced absenteeism).

£14bn
of economic output is lost by UK businesses each year

It is estimated that domestic violence costs UK businesses in excess of £14bn each year due to decreased productivity, poor performance, absenteeism and employee turnover (Oliver et al., 2019). Research in the US has shown that 71% female victims of Domestic Violence reported that they struggled to concentrate at work, with 63% of the same cohort stating that they did not work at their optimal level in the year following these experiences, indicating the long-term needs of victims beyond the point of escape (Swanberg & Macke, 2006).

KPMG (2019) suggest lower productivity at work for employees experiencing DA, as reported by 21-56% of those who experienced DA (varying across international markets). In addition, KPMG find that between 41% and 88% of those who had experienced domestic violence and abuse during their working life reported that it had impacted their career progression. Whilst being a personal impact statistic, career progression is also a metric that impacts on organisations by proxy. This creates both lost income opportunities for the organisation and the employee.

Victims of DA suffer a higher prevalence of adverse physical health consequences both due to physical injury and the continued stress / threats of their living situation. This extends to include mental health problems, including complex-trauma, stress and depression that can be present both during and post-domestic abuse. Statistics

indicate that the incidence of physical injury is 28% for female victims and 45 % for male victims whilst the estimated incidence of metal health problems is 3 times more likely for DA victims than within the general population, with 63 % of DA victims suffering from depression (Office for National Statistics, 2022). These presentations call under the duty of care of employers, where workplace roles both interact with and are impacted by these health needs – made more complex when in the context of unrecognised DA and/or unrecognised past DA (Howard et al., 2009; Trevillion et al., 2012).

Whilst the impact documented in these reports is huge, it likely under-represents the need for DA victims and survivors. All of these reports are reflections on the impact of DA experiences in the context of work, for some they are retrospective and others current. The existing sector research, draws the need to support DA escape in the workplace – but falls short of supporting long-term recovery for victims of support, where data remains sparse but intuitive thinking reveals a likely significant need. The estimated reported markets, although large, likely

underestimate the need when we consider:

- Many men are also DA victims (1 in 3 reported victims, in fact), with the research provided to date being predominantly focused on women (no men represented in the Vodafone research).
- DA escape represents a critical step in recovery, but not the only one. Many victims leave with the psychological effects of complex trauma alongside physical and co-morbid mental health needs, which will require lengthy support and has likely significantly impacted on productivity and presenteeism without yet being audited.
- Many victims go on to have enduring and complex divorces, which can maintain exposure to abusive behaviours and so can be considered as enduring abuse, despite apparent escape.



32% had experienced domestic abuse

33% of those said their workplace provided access to a safe space to work.

94% said it impacted their work performance, with a third (32%) stating it had also seriously affected their career progression

Only **16%** said their workplace had a dedicated policy supporting survivors of domestic abuse.

1 in 10 quit their job

1 in 2 said the DA affected their co-workers

Opinium surveyed more than 4,700 workers across nine countries in September 2021 for Vodafone Foundation

- The research focuses on domestic violence, whilst other forms of domestic abuse are also very common and impact heavily on personal wellbeing and functioning

The case is clear for employers, DA has conceptually moved from being a private issue to a workplace issue for many employees. This is evident in the mounting pressure on businesses to embed DA employee support policies with calls from the UK government, trade unions, HR bodies (e.g. CIPD) and domestic abuse charities (CIPD, 2023). This is in the context of significant increased awareness of the issue since reported DA rate increases during COVID.

With only 6% of organisations having yet created such a policy (CIPD, 2023) the provider market is primed to expand quickly.

The Role of Organisations in Supporting Victims

Organisations within the UK are increasingly assuming a pivotal role in addressing domestic abuse (DA) by actively supporting victims within their workforce. This section explores the multifaceted role that these organisations play in providing assistance and creating a safe environment for victims. It is challenging for organisations to navigate, as the learning is steep alongside the topic appearing to be complex – both of which represent organisational needs in meeting their responsibilities.

The role of organisations can perhaps be best presented as three themes;

I. Creating Safe Spaces

One of the fundamental responsibilities of employers is to ensure their workplaces are safe and free from harm. Recognising that domestic abuse can have far-reaching effects, organisations are taking proactive steps to create safe spaces where victims can seek refuge and support. This may include implementing strict confidentiality measures, providing secure channels for reporting abuse and ensuring the physical safety of employees.

Numerous sector reports identify the workplace as perhaps the only safe place for some employees – where access to conversations and technology may be secure from access by third parties. This safe place concept benefits from being intentional rather than coincidental, meaning that employers might consider how to ensure this safety particularly around confidentiality in respect of any disclosures, varying disclosure routes (that bypass managers etc) and technological considerations that lock down email accounts, laptops and phones for employee only use, especially in the context of remote / hybrid working models where technology may be present in the home.

Safety also extends to considerations relating to health need and workplace expectations. Providing adaptations that support recovery – such as flexible working and careful avoidance of unfair dismissal in the context of performance issues due to unrecognised DA. This point connects to the next section, on awareness.

II. Awareness – Training

Education and awareness are key components of any effective strategy to combat domestic abuse. Organisations are investing in training programmes to educate employees, managers, and HR personnel about the signs of DA and how to respond sensitively and effectively. This not only empowers individuals to seek help but also fosters a culture of empathy and support within the organisation.

Vodafone have mapped this into an organisational culture and actions strategy, which they refer to as the recognise, respond and refer model in their proposed global DA workforce policy, which includes reference to a proposed toolkit of resources (Vodafone & Pillinger, 2019).

Many training programmes include upskilling employers and employees on aspects of workplace awareness including, but not limited to:

- Definitions of DA.
- Myths relating to DA.
- UK law in relation to DA.
- DA impact on workforce.
- Spotting signs of abuse in employee behaviours.
- Destigmatising the idea of a victim.
- Role clarity in respect to supporting a victim.
- Workplace policies and procedures (potential / existing)
- Workplace guides for managers.
- Response planning (immediate threat vs ongoing need)
- Workplace adjustments (from flexible working to new email addresses and screened inbound phone calls etc).
- Responding to financial abuse.
- Hybrid and home working considerations.
- Communication skills, supporting victims through the process.
- Internal referral procedures.
- Police referral criteria and procedures.
- Continued support.
- Seeking support in response to the training itself.

The goal of awareness training is two-fold, to empower the organisation to proactively seek out those who need support and to potentially trigger awareness in employees who are experiencing DA without awareness, who may attend the training themselves. The training requires a structured framework to map onto, which is where organisational policy becomes most valuable.

III. Policy Development and Implementation

The development of a DA policy can involve extensive research and internal culture change (as shown by Vodafone and L’Oreal et al). It can also be informed by internal evidence and input that is being provided increasingly by the UK government and organisations such as the TUC, as demonstrated by policy implementations such as those communicated by Kellogg’s.

It is fair to admit that this area of need is complex, both in terms of keeping employees safe and well, and in terms of assuming the correct position as an employer supporting a domestic and mental health situation. Specialists can be brought in to train the organisation and support policy creation and change, a joined up approach that best supports cultural change – an option frequently taken. There are numerous organisations specifically orientated to both lobby for and support this change across the employment sector, such as the Employer’s Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA).

Independent of development method, organisations are visibly developing comprehensive domestic abuse policies that outline their commitment to supporting victims. These policies often provide the clear guidelines on reporting procedures, access to counselling services, and workplace adjustments, such as flexible working arrangements, to accommodate victims' needs.

The goal is to provide an inclusive structured framework for addressing DA cases within the workplace. The limiting variable, the support options on offer and the routes to accessing them, via the workplace.

Supporting Employees : trends and opportunities

Recognising that they cannot tackle this complex issue alone, organisations are forging partnerships with external organisations and support services. These collaborations may involve working with local DA charities, helplines, or legal aid services to ensure that victims receive the assistance they need outside of the workplace as well.

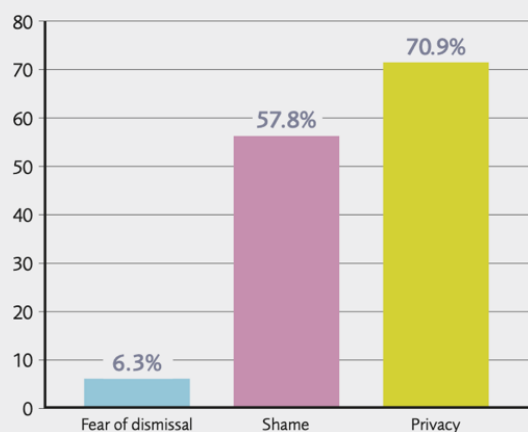
Employee Assistance Programmes have become a valuable resource for victims of DA. These programmes offer confidential counselling and support services to employees facing personal challenges, including domestic abuse. Organisations are increasingly including DA-related support as part of their EAP offerings, providing a lifeline for those in need (EAP Association, n.d.; Pollack et al., 2010).

There is space for innovation in supporting a wider market of need, thinking beyond counselling and third sector/party support. These approaches represent a rather dated EAP offer, when compared to mental health support more generally – where self-referred, self-delivered and self-managed digital programmes are becoming a standard option for employees.

The need for similar approaches is evident in DA support packages, whilst this has until now represented a gap in available provider options. Let's explore.

The need for choice

Survey question: "If not (Figure 6), what were the reasons you did not discuss this with anyone at work?"



The primary barrier to enabling employees to receive any support package created, is that less than one third of those experiencing DA tend to disclose it at work (TUC, 2014). The main reasons reported were feeling ashamed and the need for privacy. This is reported in research that predominantly represents female victims, whereas it is known that significantly fewer male victims seek support than female victims – also reporting similar reasons. In a context where productivity and performance is central to your role, such as work, it is understandable that people may struggle to show such a vulnerable side of

themselves. Added to this, the fact that 1 in 6 (17%) of the same respondents reported that their abuser was employed in the same workplace.

Lack of awareness about the abuse, confusion about reality, shame, guilt and fear are all common to victims of abuse – no matter the gender of the victim. Disclosing this as an issue is complex as it requires awareness of the situation, awareness that disclosing at work is a relevant action and a belief / trust that taking this step will improve the situation without any negative impact at work. This has been demonstrated as a valid concern, by the TUC, who heard that some managers were “unsympathetic to the reasons for persistent lateness, unexplained absences, or poor performance”, resulting in sometimes being dismissed. The issues of shame and the need for privacy should not be reduced in considerations of how to create support, as these are two of the primary maintaining variables in domestic abusive relationships where the reality is held private and the experience is shameful to recognise.

Currently, almost all routes to receiving support for current or past experiences of Domestic Abuse are via personal disclosure. This is understandably complex in the context of shame and privacy needs, and studies suggest that this accounts for the low disclosure rates across all genders and very high absence of support contact from male victims / survivors (Szilassy & policybristol, 2019). As in other mental health settings, there is a need for choice in how to access support – where disclosure should be an option, not a requirement. Of course, this means that support for some is implicitly private and self-delivered, recognising that what adaptations and support are accessed via the workplace are the choice of the employee as is the option to maintain confidentiality.

Support Options Gap

For organisations who seek to support these DA victims and survivors who represent the more typical disclosure avoidant characteristics, there is a need for wider options of self-referred and self-delivered support.

This need represents innovation trends seen across mental health more generally, including anxiety, depression and burnout – where digital solutions are offered as private direct access options, tackling the known stigma around mental health and empowering employees to choose how to manage their own mental health needs. There has been a sector wide explosion in providers of digital mental health support.

Until now, no such option has existed to support domestic abuse recovery.

Introduction to GOGL (Get Out Get Love)

GOGL is a digital recovery programme, developed by the multi-award-winning (for eHealth innovation) Clinical Psychologist and author of the book (Get Out Get Love: What everyone should know, in and after abusive relationships). The book is published into the UK, by Hachette and contracted for translation and release into the US (2023), Romania (2024), Estonia (2024), France (2024), Saudi Arabia (2024) and Canada (2024).



The programme supports adults through their own recovery out of and beyond domestic abuse (of all types). It is a self-paced digital journey, that can be undertaken in 20-minute steps – including audio guides, reflective journaling and other exercises that support awareness and recovery. The model is evidence-based, built out of the dominant trauma-informed approaches in DA recovery and suitable as an option for those who are exiting short-term trauma stabilisation therapy and/or choose not to access therapy.

The programme is delivered via a desktop and/or iOS and Android App and provides long-term support, recommended at 6-9 months to complete all modules. User feedback suggests long-term access is beneficial, with users showing a preference for accessing the modules as and when needed, in a non-linear fashion.

It offers unique characteristics, in contrast to and/or in combination with existing support routes for DA victims:

- Flexible pacing, directed by the user – supporting flexibility around personal recovery need and time capacity.
- Convenient – with access provided via any web enabled device and/or within a dedicated App.
- Private – no disclosure is needed to access the app and no reporting of any personal experiences is required, creating a sense of trust that no personal information is at risk.
- Designed for all sexes, including inclusive and diverse representative content and gender-neutral branding.
- User programme progress tracking capability.
- Cost effective – fractional cost, relative to counselling and/or absenteeism as a result of opting out of counselling, due to disclosure requirements.

- Capable of sitting alongside existing mental health offers, without creating conflict – due to it being unique in its approach.
- Immediate access, with no application process or waiting times.

Efficacy Data

GOGLE evaluations have been funded by Innovate UK and the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR). The most recent evaluation (May 2023) of 60 DA service referred and self-referred DA victims, at various stages of exit from their relationships, were positive. The main outcomes are listed below, with a full evaluation report available on request:

- 96% said it connected with their own experience.
- 89% said they'd like to continue using it in the long-term (i.e. returning to it over time).
- 96% rated it 4 stars or above (65% 5 stars).
- 93% stated that it was helpful in their recovery.
- Users made specific recommendations for GOGLE to be made available alongside DA service support (and therapy).
- GOGLE supported continuity of support for people in transient accommodation / circumstances.

GOGLE is currently undergoing service implementation research with a number of partner organisations, including NHS Primary Care, DA charity and NHS social prescribing sites and community therapy services, funded by the NIHR.

Enabling Implementation

GOGLE is ready for implementation into employee settings, potentially with additional co-design opportunities for early adopters. This includes a full adoption and implementation package evaluation on offer to potential host services, which could include some or all of:

- Review and integration planning into existing wellbeing offers (including risk management considerations), also with existing mental health partner engagement where needed (UXC Organisational Psychologist)
- Staff training relating to the recognise, respond and refer approach to supporting DA victims at work (UXC Chartered Psychologist programme), bespoke to early adopter organisations.
- Training offers to counselling teams, to support staff alongside the programme (UXC Clinical Psychologist).
- Organisation policy creation support (UXC Organisational Psychologist).

- The GOGL programme plus additional assets where appropriate (bespoke branded sign-up routes, organisational signposting and policy additions to the programme, data reporting schedules etc).
- Engagement strategy development and implementation (messaging, marketing and ongoing engagement approaches).

UXCgroup the parent company of GOGL, are regularly commissioned Psychologist specialists and researchers in these areas of implementation and organisational design.

Key Message

GOGL **offers a choice** for people in the workplace, to access support without risk of shame and/or their personal story needing to be disclosed. The programme provides choice, self-pace, flexibility, privacy and is evidence-based and credible. Accessing the programme has the potential to reduce mental health need in staff who opt out of disclosure or currently choose therapy in the absence of other routes.

GOGL offers support for a sector of employees that is seemingly unsupported, currently – but a market that is evidenced as existing and experiences negative impact in terms of their own wellbeing and in their employing organisations.

Conclusion

There is a definite push onto organisations to support victims of DA, in the workplace. This push is both coming from trailblazing organisations, and also raised awareness of the need, enough to motivate businesses to introduce DA support policies and packages of intervention. There is a definite trend, in the employment sector to act on this need for both moral reasons and to mitigate the negative impact of DA on the lives of staff and the performance of their organisations.

Currently, the routes to support are limited with the primary access route being via disclosure – and most often being met with face-to-face support offers. Whilst effective for some, most choose not to disclose at work and many opt out of therapy, for many reasons including shame and the need for privacy. For many, this means that unmet need is maintained in the workplace, with the consequences of DA experiences and associated mental and physical health needs impacting at work. To date, there has been little else to offer employees as a support option.

The introduction of the GOGL programme is an enabler, in that organisations can offer early and immediate access to an evidence-based self-care solution that is private and safe to explore, without any risk of public shame. The programme, in fact, directly addresses shame as a core component. This offers choice to employees, choice being a core value of health offers in the health sector to date. The digital nature of the programme maps onto the wider shift in EAP offers, where mental health choices for employees regularly include digital self-help as an alternate to counselling and or similar. The adoption route is complex and may cause anxiety in some organisations, which the GOGL team are skilled and equipped to support as OD specialists.

The outcome is more employees supported earlier, in a self-empowered fashion – without escalating needs. Adapted cultures, within organisations, to raise awareness and support access to offers made available. Reduced utilisation of therapy and longer-term support provided, as a consequence of the long-term approach delivered within the programme.

GOGL represents an opportunity to work together, to support employees at scale – something we are excited to collaborate on, with invested organisations.

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