

Domestic abuse advice





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What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is any form of unacceptable personal abuse committed by a partner, ex-partner or family member in an existing or previous relationship. It can happen to anyone - men and women and those in same sex relationships.

It can involve a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviour including:

Physical – pulling hair; biting; choking; beating; kicking; slapping; punching; burning; strangulation; stabbing; denying sleep

Emotional/psychological – jealousy; humiliation; degradation; being the subject of put downs; isolation from family and friends; threats of suicide; using your children to inform or report on you

Verbal abuse – name calling; threats to harm; being constantly blamed; being ‘outed’ if you are gay

Sexual – rape; enforced sex or prostitution; pornography; any sexual behaviour or activity which you find unacceptable; indecent phone calls

Financial control – withholding money; having wages, benefits, pensions taken away from you; having to account for your spending

‘Honour’ based violence – this is a crime or incident which has, or may have been, committed to protect or defend the ‘honour’ of the family and/or community as perceived by the perpetrator

Stalking and harrassment – following; sending unwanted gifts or unsolicited text messages; phone calls; turning up at your home or place of work uninvited

Controlling behaviour - making a person subordinate and/or dependent on them by isolating them from sources of support; exploiting resources; depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape; regulating everyday behaviour.

Coercive control - an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten.

Who can be affected?

It can happen to anyone, in all kinds of relationships regardless of ethnicity, religion, culture, age, sexuality, disability or gender. Statistically one in four women, and one in six men, will be affected by domestic abuse during their life. In addition, one in four same sex relationships will be abusive as will one in four teenage dating relationships.

It is important to remember that domestic abuse is about power and control. Responsibility for the violence and abuse lies entirely with the person committing these acts. Victims should not blame themselves for someone else's behaviour. It is important not to blame yourself.

There are many agencies available to give you advice, support and practical help. A full list of services can be found at **www.safernh.co.uk** and **www.hampshiredomesticabuse.org.uk**

Getting help

Each person's situation will be different and so services and support are tailored to meet the needs of individuals. By talking to someone face-to-face, by telephone or by accessing internet-based information, you will be able to get information to help you make informed decisions about what choices you have.

In an emergency situation, the first priority should be the safety of yourself and any children and you should contact the police on **999**. The police will attend your address as a matter of priority and will help to keep you safe, both through looking for evidence of any criminal offences as well as assessing your safety needs. This could include a referral for refuge accommodation, outreach support or providing you with telephone numbers for local and national organisations who can help.

Refuges or emergency housing

A refuge is a safe house where people can escape domestic abuse and get emotional and practical support from staff who understand what they have been through. All the people living in the refuge are escaping abuse and the addresses of the refuges are confidential.

Refuges are sited accross the country and those accessing this emergency accommodation will be housed well away from their current address to ensure their safety. Referrals for refuge accommodation can be made through the council's housing department, the police, other agencies or by calling the National Domestic Violence Helpline on **0808 2000 247**, or **0808 801 0327** if you are a male victim.

Outreach support

Support is provided to both male and female victims of domestic abuse by providing you with information about how you can keep safe, housing options, access to benefits, legal advice, advocacy and signposting to other services. Details of how to access outreach support can be found at www.safernh.co.uk and www.hampshiredomesticabuse.org.uk

Keeping safe

If you are in immediate danger at any time, call the police on 999.

If you are thinking of leaving your partner, it is best if you can plan this carefully, as sometimes the risk of violence increases if your abuser thinks you are about to leave. Plan to leave at a time when you know that your partner will not be around and take your children with you, making sure that you have a safe place to go. You can ask for a police officer to be present when you leave. If possible, try to pack an emergency bag containing:

- Clothing and toiletries for you and your children
- Your children's favourite small toys
- Some form of identification for you and your children (passports, birth certificates etc.)
- Any documentation relating to the abuse – diaries, police reports, court orders, medical records
- Money, bank or post office books, child benefit or welfare books/cards
- Prescribed medication for you and your children
- Car and house keys

If you are still living with your partner, it is important to develop a safety plan so that you can keep yourself and your children safe:

- Consider who can you tell about your situation - is there a friend, relative, colleague, neighbour or someone else you trust who can give you help and support?
- Try to seek professional advice talk to the police, outreach or domestic abuse service.
- Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency and what they need to say, including their name, address, telephone number.
- Identify a safe exit and use it if you feel an abusive situation is about to arise.
- If you cannot leave, try to avoid risk areas such as the kitchen or garage where there may be weapons or knives.
- Teach your children that it is better for them to get to a place of safety and phone for help rather than trying to intervene directly.
- Keep important documents and a list of emergency contact details with you.
- Pack an emergency bag and keep it somewhere safe.
- Keep your mobile phone fully charged and with you at all times.
- Keep a diary of all events, assaults, harassments, threats and contacts by phone or texts.
- Plan in advance how you might respond to different situations, including crisis situations.

Help for offenders

Are you worried about hurting the one you love?

Many people are concerned about their own abusive and/or controlling behaviour but don't know how to change. The Respect phoneline provides an opportunity to talk to someone about your or someone else's behaviour and find out about the options for getting help. This could be through telephone conversations or access to a longer term behavioural change programme. The programmes will help you to understand more about why you may react in certain ways and how these reactions impact on your family.

The helpline number is **0808 802 4040**, or for information about our local behavioural change programme, ADAPT, call **02380 009898**

Supporting a friend or relative

There is no simple way to 'spot' whether a person is experiencing domestic abuse, but a pattern of abuse could include:

- Absence from work or school or social events
- Fear of their partner, references to their partner's anger
- Personality changes – an outgoing person becomes withdrawn
- Repeated unexplained injuries

People often feel awkward about taking sides and getting involved in another person's relationship, but if you think a friend or family member is a victim of domestic abuse, they will appreciate your help.



How to help

If you think a friend or loved one is being abused, try telling them that you're concerned, say why you're worried and ask if they want to talk to you about it. Let them know you want to help. You don't have to know all the answers, and the important thing is to break their isolation.

Always prioritise safety – yours and theirs. The abuser won't appreciate you getting involved so be careful about what you do and where and when you do it – be careful not to intervene personally and ring the police if there is immediate danger.

Support your friend in whatever decision he or she is currently making about their relationship, while being clear that the abuse is wrong. Remember, what you are trying to do is be supportive, not to make them feel judged. It's not always easy to leave.

Stay in contact over time and help your friend or loved one to explore the choices they have. Try to focus on their safety rather than the abuser or the relationship. Let them guide you in how best to support them.

Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault and that you are there for them. Remind them of their strengths, challenge them if they put themselves down or blame themselves, praise them for every step they take and let them know they have your support.

I'm concerned that my partner or former partner may have been violent or abusive in the past

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law, gives you a formal way to ask the police for information if you believe that you or someone you know is at risk of abuse from a partner or former partner. It applies to men and women in same-sex as well as opposite-sex relationships.

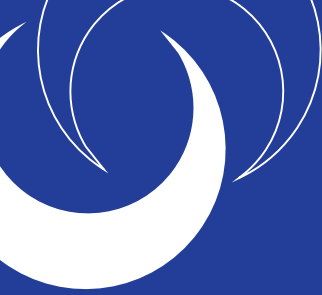
If police checks show that an individual has a record of abusive offences, or if there is other information that indicates you or the person you know is at risk, consideration will be given to sharing information with whoever is best placed to arrange protection. That could be potential victims themselves, the person who requested the information or someone else best placed to take action. If you are requesting the information, we will discuss your concerns with you and decide whether it is appropriate for you to be given more information to help protect anyone at risk.

The aim of the scheme is to give people an informed choice on whether or not to continue with a relationship and provide support whatever their decision.

For further information contact 101 and tell the operator you are requesting information as part of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

Who can apply for information?

Anyone can apply for information, whether you're concerned that you yourself are at risk from a partner or former partner, or if you're concerned about someone else at risk. You can apply for information if you are concerned about the safety of a friend, relative, loved-one, carer, colleague or neighbour. However, the person applying for information will only receive the information if they are best placed to protect any potential victim. Someone asking for information about someone else at risk may therefore not receive the information.



Contacts

**In an emergency or if a crime is taking place,
always contact 999**

Police non-emergency number

101

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (women)

0808 2000 247 / www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Men's advice line (men)

0808 801 0327 / www.mensadvice.org.uk

Childline (children)

0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk

Broken Rainbow (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual helpline)

0300 999 5428 / www.brokenrainbow.org.uk

Respect (help for offenders / practitioners advice)

0808 802 4040 / www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Stalking Helpline

0300 636 0300 / www.stalkinghelpline.org

Safer North Hampshire

For a list of local support services within North Hampshire,
please visit www.safernh.co.uk

Contact your local community safety team:

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council 01256 844844

Hart District Council 01252 622122

Rushmoor Borough Council 01252 398399

Web - www.safernh.co.uk **Follow us on Twitter** - @safernorthhants

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