



HELP AND SUPPORT SERVICES

There are several organisations that victims can contact if they want to get help:

Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run by Women's Aid and Refuge

0808 2000 247

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

There are also specialist helplines in Wales **0808 80 10 800**, Scotland **0800 027 1234** and Northern Ireland **0808 802 1414**

Men's Advice Line (for men experiencing domestic abuse)

0808 801 0327

www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Victim Support

0808 16 89 111

www.victimsupport.org.uk

DO NOT confront the abuser. Do not do anything that may endanger you, the victim or their children.



DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse is a largely hidden crime, occurring mainly in people's homes.

It is not just physical or sexual violence; it can include psychological, emotional or financial abuse as well – in fact this type of abuse is now accepted as a crime in its own right, called 'coercive and controlling behaviour'.

Most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men, against women. Men however can also experience domestic abuse.

Children are victims too, and even if they are not abused directly themselves, they will suffer emotional scars from witnessing abuse that can last a lifetime.

The government estimates that nearly two million people suffer domestic abuse each year. In 2016/17, 82 women and 13 men were killed by a partner or ex-partner.

140,000 children live in households where serious domestic abuse takes place.

Domestic abuse between intimate partners can include:

- **Sexual abuse and rape** - including within a relationship
- **Physical violence**
- **Financial abuse**
- **Coercive control** – a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence
- **Online or digital abuse**
- **Threats to kill or harm** them, a partner, another family member or pet
- **Harassment and stalking**

Domestic abuse also encompasses other forms of abuse that can occur in the home, such as elder abuse and abuse between family members.



Domestic abuse is part of violence against women and girls, which also includes different forms of family violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and so-called 'honour-based crimes' that are committed by family members, and often with multiple perpetrators.

How to spot the signs of domestic abuse

People experiencing domestic abuse can change their behaviour in ways that are obvious or more subtle. If you are worried about someone you know, and you can answer yes to more than one of these questions, they may be suffering domestic abuse:

- Have they stopped doing things they used to do, like seeing friends or family, or going to work or college?
- Are they fearful of their partner's reactions to things they do; perhaps they asked you not to tell their partner about something they've done?
- Does their partner have control of their money? Do they worry about spending too much, or have to explain everything they spend?
- Does their partner check up on them a lot? Do they constantly receive text messages or phone calls; does the partner turn up unexpectedly?
- Does their partner get jealous? Do they get accused of being flirty or unfaithful?



- Does their partner put them down in public, or belittle them?
- Has their self-esteem dropped recently?
- Does their partner set lots of rules that they must follow, such as who they can see, what they can wear, what they can spend money on?
- Do they bear any bruises, or other signs of physical injury?

What to do if you suspect someone is in an abusive relationship

If someone is in immediate danger, call the police on **999**.

Otherwise, you can try to find a safe space and time to talk to them and let them know that you are there for help and support.

Evidence shows that if you directly ask someone whether they are suffering domestic abuse, rather than

waiting for them to bring it up, they are more likely to speak out about it. And people are much more likely to confide in someone they know, than to the police or professional services.

Always start the conversation face-to-face – if you try and have it over the phone or social media their partner may find the messages and retaliate against them or you. Make sure you won't be overheard or interrupted.

If they don't want to talk about it, don't push it. Just tell them that if they do ever want to discuss it, you will be there for them.

DON'T OFFER ADVICE YOURSELF, but signpost them to relevant helplines and support services (see next page). Do not tell them to leave their partner immediately, as this can be highly risky for them.

For more detailed advice about how to talk to people you think may be suffering from domestic abuse, see www.ourwatch.org.uk/crimes-archive/how-to-help/