

# **DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Information from Victim Support

## **What is domestic abuse?**

Domestic abuse is threats, violence, and coercive or controlling behaviour between people who have a relationship with each other (or have had in the past). It can happen between partners, within families or shared homes. Both men and women can be affected. It happens within heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender relationships. It happens between people of all cultures, religions or social groups. It's based on one person having power or control over another, and it often gets worse over time.

Some organisations use the word 'violence' instead of 'abuse'. These terms are interchangeable.

Domestic abuse takes many forms including (but not limited to) physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse. It also includes digital abuse (using smartphones and social networking to harass and intimidate).

## **A few facts**

Studies show that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic abuse during their life – the police will get a call every minute from someone who is experiencing domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse victims are often made to feel like that they won't be believed or are threatened with further abuse – either toward the victim, their children or even family – if they tell anyone about what is happening. On average a victim of domestic abuse will have been assaulted 35 times before contacting the police.

In a large number of cases, children are often present in the home when a parent is being abused, either being directly harmed themselves or being witnesses to the abuse.

## **We can help**

We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents. Our volunteers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to people who have been threatened or abused.

Our services are confidential, free and available to everyone.

Victims are usually put in touch with us by the police. But you can also contact us directly, whether or not you want to report the crime to the police and regardless

of when it happened. We'll help you, whatever decision you make.

If you do go to the police, we can go to the police station with you. We can give you information about court procedures and applying for compensation. We can help you to contact other organisations if you need different kinds of help. If you prefer, you can talk to someone anonymously on our Victim Supportline. The details are on the back page of this leaflet.

You can also contact us if you know someone who needs help. Research shows that just under half of victims will tell a relative or friend. Please see the list later, of things you can do to help others.

## **How we can help**

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, we want to help you. We will:

- Listen to you in a non-judgmental manner, prioritising your safety and confidentiality
- Provide a specially trained person to assist with emotional support, information and signposting. They can put you in touch with other agencies which may help with issues around housing, benefits and legal advice
- Ensure practical safety advice is given to help increase your safety and that of any children

- Help explore your options around the abuse and encourage you to make your own choices
- Offer onward referrals to specialist support agencies in your local area where appropriate
- Give you time to think about your decisions and offer any continuous support you may require regardless of the choices you make.

## **The effects on children**

We should not underestimate the impact of domestic abuse on children. In a large number of cases children are present in the home when an adult is being abused. We will do everything we can to help abused adults to support their children effectively and have a specific service for children experiencing DA.

## **Your safety**

All the organisations listed under useful contacts will be able to offer information on staying safe.

If you are facing an emergency, phone the police on **999**.

## **How to help others**

If you suspect or know that someone is affected by domestic abuse you should:

- listen to them and take them seriously
- be there for them, whatever decisions they make

- not judge them
- help them to find support and advice
- not try to intervene or sort out the situation yourself as this can make things worse
- respect their need to be secretive
- not expect them to simply leave, because:
  - they may need help to leave safely
  - they may not want to leave
  - they may want the abuser to leave.

Whatever their circumstances they may need legal, financial and emotional support.

Do not put yourself in a dangerous position and be careful not to further endanger them. You can contact Victim Support for support and advice.

## **Useful contacts**

### **Victim Supportline: 08 08 16 89 111**

Information and support for anyone affected by crime. Our freephone service is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For advice and information visit

**[www.victim support.org.uk](http://www.victim support.org.uk)**

You can contact us using Next Generation Text by adding **18001** before any of our phone numbers.

### **National Domestic Violence**

**Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

A 24-hour freephone service for women provided by Refuge and Women's Aid.

### **Galop National LGBT+ DA helpline:**

**0800 999 5428**

National LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline.

Open 10am–5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Friday and 10am–8pm, Wednesday, Thursday.

### **Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327**

A freephone service offering advice and support for men in abusive relationships.

Open 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday.

## Where to go for support:

We are an **independent** charity offering **free, confidential** support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using our 24/7 live chat service:  
**victimsupport.org.uk/live-chat**
- using BSL: **victimsupport.org.uk/bsl**
- Online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit  
**victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved**

 **VictimSupport**

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 **Linkedin.com/company/victim-support**

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Victim Support, Building 3, Eastern Business Park, Wern Fawr Lane,  
Old St Mellons, Cardiff CF3 5EA  
Telephone: 020 7268 0200

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