

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS MUCH MORE COMMON THAN MOST PEOPLE REALISE. EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT EXPERIENCING IT YOURSELF, YOU MAY WELL KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS. THIS LEAFLET MAY HELP YOU TO HELP THEM.

# VIOLENCE

FINANCIAL CONTROL EMOTIONAL ABUSE

### LEAVING SAFELY

- Have some money saved in case you need to use a taxi or bus.
- If you don't have a mobile, find somewhere you can quickly and safely use the phone should you need to.
- Take important documents such as your marriage and birth certificate, any court orders, passport, benefit and bank books, and health records.
- Have a small bag already packed with an extra set of keys for the house and car should you need to leave in an emergency.
- If you choose to leave, try to take your children with you.
- Take essential medicines that you and your children may need.
- Leave when it is safe to do so.
- If you later discover that you have left something essential behind, you can always arrange for a police escort so that you can return for it.

REMOVE THIS CARD AND KEEP IT WITH YOU FOR QUICK REFERENCE

## HOW CAN I BE PROTECTED FROM THE VIOLENCE?

### MOVING AWAY

IF YOU WOULD LIKE ADVICE AND HELP ON HOUSING OPTIONS, YOU CAN CONTACT YOUR COUNCIL'S HOUSING DEPARTMENT. THE PHONE NUMBERS ARE IN THE PHONE BOOK.

They will be able to let you know if schemes are available locally to help you stay in your home if that is what you would prefer and is appropriate. They can also tell you about access to social housing, tenancy agreements, transfers, eviction issues, and outreach and resettlement services. If you cannot stay in your home, they will let you know what other options you have including refuge services and whether you are eligible for help under the homelessness law.

A refuge is a safe house where women and children can stay free from violence. It offers a temporary breathing space where you can make decisions free from pressure and fear. There are refuges specially for women and children from particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds and some refuges have access for people with disabilities.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

If you are leaving a violent relationship, you will urgently need a range of financial and practical support. If you have in the past shared a claim, you will need to make your own claim when you leave the relationship. In either case, you will need to contact your local Jobcentre Plus office, where your circumstances will be treated sympathetically and you will be told what benefits you can claim. There are various benefits you may be able to claim and you can claim some of these even if you are working.

### WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?

CHILDREN ARE VERY MUCH THE SILENT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, OR BEING A VICTIM OF IT, CAN HAVE A SEVERE EFFECT ON A CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR, HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN WAYS THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE VISIBLE IN SCHOOL.

These can include low self-confidence, withdrawal or anxiety and behavioural difficulties. Children are often more aware of the abuse than their parents realise.

Your abuser may threaten that if you leave or tell anyone about the violence, your children will be taken away from you. Social Services will not take children away for this reason. If you fear your partner will abduct your children, you should get advice as soon as possible. Your local Refuge, Women's Aid group, law centre, citizens advice bureau, or a solicitor can advise you on issues such as:

- ▶ parental responsibility
- ▶ where children should live
- ▶ who they should have contact with
- ▶ changing schools and related problems.

### HOW CAN I HELP A FRIEND WHO IS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Here are some basic steps you can take.

- **Most importantly, make sure they are safe. This is the number one priority.**
- **Be understanding.** Explain that there are many people in this situation. Acknowledge that it takes strength to trust someone enough to talk about the abuse. Allow them time to talk, and don't push them to give too much detail if they don't want to.
- **Do not criticise the abuser** as it will put the person off telling you any more.
- **Be supportive.** Be a good listener, and encourage them to express their hurt and anger.
- **Let them make their own decisions.** If they aren't ready to leave the relationship, this is their decision.
- **Ask if they have suffered physical harm.** Offer to go with them to hospital if they need to go. If they want to report the assault to the police, help them to do this.

- **Give them information on the help which is available.** Look at the options together. Go with them to visit a solicitor if they are ready to take this step.
- **Help them work out safe plans for leaving the relationship.** Let them decide what is safe and what is not. Don't encourage them to follow any plans they are not sure about.
- **Offer to let them use your address and phone number for receiving information and messages.**
- **Above all, do not put yourself in a dangerous position.** For example, do not offer to talk to the abuser about your friend, or let the abuser see you as a threat to their relationship.

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- Have a small bag already packed with an extra set of keys for the house and car should you need to leave in an emergency. You may prefer leaving this with a trusted friend.
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ACCOMPANYING YOU EVERYWHERE  
TELLING YOU THERE IS NO WAY ANYONE WOULD BELIEVE YOU

**PUNCHING**  
BURNING YOU WITH CIGARETTES  
HURTING YOU IN FRONT OF YOUR CHILDREN

**KICKING YOU**  
DENYING THERE IS ANY ABUSE TAKING PLACE

**SPITTING ON YOU**  
HURTING YOUR CHILDREN

TELLING YOU THERE ARE NO OTHER OPTIONS

**CALLING YOU A FAILURE**

FORCING YOU TO HAVE SEX  
HUMILIATING YOU IN FRONT OF YOUR CHILDREN

**CHOKING YOU**  
TELLING YOU WHAT TO WEAR

**SHOUTING**  
TELLING YOU THAT YOU'RE UGLY

TAKING YOUR MONEY

**STALKING YOU**

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN FEAR OF

**RAPING**  
OFTEN SLAPPING YOU

**MOCKING**  
TELLING OTHERS LIES ABOUT YOU

**ISOLATING YOU**  
TELLING YOU IT'S BECAUSE THEY LOVE YOU

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS OFTEN USED TO KEEP POWER AND CONTROL OVER ANOTHER PERSON. SO-CALLED HONOUR CRIMES, FORCED MARRIAGE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION ARE ALSO OTHER FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

# DOMESTIC

THREATS HARASSMENT PHYSICAL ATTACKS

If you are being abused, threatened, or physically or sexually assaulted by a partner, a former partner, or a family member, that is domestic violence. As well as actual physical violence, domestic violence can involve a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviour, including:

- ▶ THREATS
- ▶ HARASSMENT
- ▶ PHYSICAL ATTACKS
- ▶ FINANCIAL CONTROL
- ▶ EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Anyone can experience domestic violence – it can happen in all kinds of relationships and for any reason, regardless of age, race, sex, sexuality, disability, wealth, geography and lifestyle. It is rarely a one-off event. Physical and sexual abuse tends to get more severe and happen more often over time, sometimes only ending when one person actually kills the other.

This chain of events needs to be broken and a range of organisations are working to do this. We have mentioned examples in this leaflet. But individuals also have an important part to play. For those people experiencing violence, the support of a trusted friend can be invaluable. Breaking the chain is a job for everyone and we all have a vital role to play in supporting victims and helping law-enforcement and other agencies to reduce violent and controlling behaviour.

**We all have the right to live without fear of violence and abuse.**

## WHAT CAN I DO?

IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED BY YOUR PARTNER OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU, THERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT STEPS YOU CAN TAKE.

- ▶ **RECOGNISE THAT IT IS HAPPENING TO YOU**
- ▶ **ACCEPT THAT YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME**
- ▶ **GET HELP AND SUPPORT**

### RECOGNISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is usually a pattern of abuse which may include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment. Some abusers are sorry for their actions and persuade their partners that the abuse won't happen again. But, however persuasive they seem, the violence usually gets worse over time.

### ACCEPTING THAT YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME

It is not easy to accept that a loved one can behave so aggressively. And because you can't explain your partner's behaviour, you may assume that you are to blame. You are not. No one deserves to be assaulted, abused or humiliated, least of all by a partner in a supposedly caring relationship. It is your abuser's behaviour that needs to change. There is no excuse.

### GETTING HELP

The most important thing you can do is tell someone you trust. You may quite easily and quickly decide to ask for help. Or, you may find the process long and painful as you try to make the relationship work and stop the violence, while struggling against the practical and emotional reasons for staying. Most people try to find help a number of times before getting what they need. And even after leaving the relationship, there may still be a risk. The point of separation is sometimes the most dangerous time. Never be afraid to ask for help again and remember, in an emergency, always call the police by dialing 999 (minicom 0800 112 999).

Police officers have the power to arrest if they have good reason for believing that an arrest is needed to prevent the offender from physically injuring you or your child.

Most police forces now have either a specialist domestic violence unit or domestic violence co-ordinators who are experienced in dealing with these cases.

## WHO CAN I TALK TO?

IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, ARE EXPERIENCING OR HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, THERE ARE A RANGE OF ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP.

We give some useful phone numbers and website details here, but there are many others. Ask at your library, local authority or citizens advice bureau for more information.

Freephone 24-hour **domestic violence helpline: 0808 2000 247**

This new national helpline is run by Women's Aid and Refuge with a minicom service and language-line facility.

**Women's Aid:**  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**Welsh Women's Aid: 029 20 39 0874**

**BAWSO** (for black women in Wales who are victims of domestic violence):  
**029 2043 7390**

**Southall Black Sisters** (for black and Asian women in the London area): **020 8571 9595**

**Broken Rainbow** Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence forum: **07812 644914**

**Local Women's Aid refuge services**  
Look in the phone book for your local number.

**Refuge: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)**  
General enquiries: **020 7395 7700**

**Victim Support: 0845 30 30 900**  
[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

**Shelterline: 0808 800 4444**

**The police:** Look in the phone book for the number of your local police station (in an emergency, always call 999).

**National Health Service:** (for example, your GP) Look in the phone book for your local number.

**The Samaritans: 0345 90 90 90**

**National Child Protection Helpline** (NSPCC): **0800 800 500**

**Foreign Commonwealth Office**  
Advice on forced marriages:  
**020 7008 0135 / 020 7008 0230**

**Careline: 020 8514 1177**

**Legal Aid advisors:**  
[www.justask.org.uk/index.jsp](http://www.justask.org.uk/index.jsp)

**Male Advice Line and Enquiry:**  
**0845 064 6800**

**Reunite** Advice, information and support to parents, guardians and family members who have had or who fear child abduction: **0116 2556 234**

## HOW CAN I BE PROTECTED FROM THE VIOLENCE?

**LEGAL PROTECTION**  
POLICE CAN ARREST AND CHARGE AND THEY HAVE A DUTY TO INVESTIGATE. AS WELL AS CONTACTING THE POLICE, YOU MAY ALSO USE THE CIVIL LAW TO GET PROTECTION.

Under the Family Law Act 1996, a 'non-molestation order' can forbid the abuser from using or threatening violence, harassing, pestering or intimidating you. For example, you can apply for an order against:

- ▶ someone you live with or have lived with (whether or not you have been married)
- ▶ someone you have agreed to marry
- ▶ someone who shares parental responsibilities for a child with you.

You may apply to a court for an occupational order to enforce your right to stay living in your home. Courts can grant occupational orders if you have a legal estate or interest in the home, or if you have rights to the home by marriage.

Under both criminal and civil law, if your partner is convicted of criminal harassment or an offence involving fear of violence, the court may also grant a restraining order. This will prevent the offender from further similar behaviour.

These orders prevent the abuser from assaulting or harassing you and also prevent them from entering your home. Courts can attach a power of arrest so that if your abuser does not keep to the order they can be arrested without you going back to court to have an arrest warrant issued.

If you are on Income Support or have a monthly disposable income (after paying essential living costs) below £267, you can get 'free' public funding (formerly known as Legal Aid) to pay for legal proceedings and advice from a solicitor. If your monthly disposable income is between £267 and £707, you may get funding on the basis that you agree to pay contributions. If you would like more information on this, please contact your local police station, a solicitor, your local magistrates' court or county court, a citizens advice bureau, Women's Aid group or Refuge.

Check to see if you qualify for Legal Aid  
[www.justask.org.uk/legalhelp/calculator.jsp?lang=en](http://www.justask.org.uk/legalhelp/calculator.jsp?lang=en)



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