

# DOMESTIC ABUSE

## Factsheet

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**Domestic abuse is the systematic pattern of behaviour on the part of the abuser designed to control or obtain power over a husband, wife, partner or child. It is experienced by women, men and children of all ages, ethnic and social backgrounds, gender identities and sexualities.**

Domestic abuse can begin at any stage of a relationship and is rarely a one-off. Incidents generally become more frequent and severe over time. Experiences could include both physical and non-physical types of abuse. It is important to remember that non-physical forms of abuse can also be as hurtful as experiencing the effects of physical violence.

There are many forms of domestic abuse. This can include the following but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Economic / Financial
- Emotional
- Coercion
- Modern slavery
- Forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

### **The impact of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on a person's life. Everybody reacts differently but the effects can include:

- depression, anxiety, panic attacks and other mental health issues
- feelings of loneliness or isolation
- a lack of confidence or self-esteem

- feelings of guilt or self-blame
- difficulties at work or in other relationships
- trouble sleeping e.g. insomnia
- substance abuse e.g. alcohol, drugs
- self-harm or suicide
- serious injury or death

## Spotting the signs

It is important to remember that domestic abuse can affect anyone. The following are some indicators to help you identify whether an adult might be experiencing domestic abuse:

- spouse or partner is excessively jealous and possessive.
- spouse or partner is charming one minute and abusive the next, with sudden changes of mood.
- spouse or partner stops them from seeing family and friends, and they could say they feel isolated.
- spouse or partner is constantly criticising them and putting them down in public.
- spouse or partner are manipulative, playing mind games and making the other person appear confused or unsure of their own judgment.
- spouse or partner controls their money.
- spouse or partner tells them what they can wear, who they can see, where they can go out.
- spouse or partner pressures them into sex when they don't want to.
- spouse or partner constantly monitors them or checks up on them via social media, reading their text messages or emails.
- spouse or partner uses anger and intimidation to scare them and make them comply.
- spouse or partner threatens or intimidates them using violent language or by smashing and breaking objects.
- does the person feel forced to alter their behaviour because of fear of their spouse or partner's reaction.
- has spouse or partner ever harmed, or threatened to harm their pet.

## When children are involved

Children living with abuse respond to their circumstances in many different ways. They may feel frightened, insecure and confused. Often, they learn to keep their feelings and fears to themselves – they may feel like the violence in their home life must be kept secret or is their fault. In some cases, children may take on a mediating or distracting role between their carers. In the most severe cases, children may even verbally or physically intervene. Changes in their typical behaviour may be noticeable by those that know or care for them.

You may see some of the following indicators that a child is experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse, but this list is not exhaustive:

- bed wetting, nightmares or insomnia
- problems in school or trouble learning
- tantrums
- withdrawal
- aggression or bullying
- signs of physical harm

The physical, psychological and emotional effects of domestic abuse on children is wide reaching and proven to affect their well-being, and their ability to engage in and maintain healthy, productive and happy relationships in the future.

## How to report a concern

Reporting a concern will vary depending on the situation in which the suspicions of abuse or disclosure come about. For example, within a setting where children are present there will be designated procedures to follow.

To report a concern, you can call your Local Authority Safeguarding Team, often referred to as a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). You can then speak to a social worker about your concerns or the disclosure, and they will give advice and support.

In addition to social services, concerns regarding children can also be reported to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The information taken by any of the aforementioned parties will then be processed according to the designated safeguarding procedures in place within the organisation.

If someone is at immediate risk call 999 and ask for the police.

If you can't talk and are calling on a mobile, press 55 and your call will be put through to the police.

If you're calling from a landline and don't speak and the operator can hear only background noise, they'll put you through to the police.

Other ways to report:

- [online](#)
- by calling 101 (If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use textphone 18001 101)
- in the safety of your local police station

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. By not reporting concerns it is enabling the potential abuse to continue. There is a risk that non-reporting may be perceived by the person disclosing as collusion or protection of the alleged abuser which may deter them from making any further disclosures.

**Remember! If the person you are talking to is in immediate danger or risk of harm, call emergency services on 999 without delay.**

### Handling a disclosure

A disclosure made by somebody experiencing domestic abuse, must be handled carefully and requires a particular response. Be mindful of your body language and unconscious expressions or vocalisations. The person you are listening to may present with hypervigilance, this is a safety strategy that they may use to identify triggers in their abuser.

The following 'do's' and 'don'ts' will help you to understand how to handle a disclosure:

#### Do's

- Listen carefully, without interruption
- Remain calm, approachable and receptive. Gentle and open ended questions such as 'can you tell me more about what happened?' are helpful
- Acknowledge you understand how difficult this may be
- Make it clear that you are taking what is said seriously
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you and that they are safe with you
- Let them know that you'll do everything you can to help them
- Make a written record of exactly what has been said and only use the exact words or phrases given to you.

#### Don't

- Promise confidentiality
- Ask leading or probing questions
- Make written notes whilst you are listening. It will be distracting and you will miss important information
- Repeatedly question or ask the individual to repeat what they have said
- Discuss the disclosure with people who do not need to know, including the person alleged of wrongdoing.

### Find out more

The following list is a small selection of the wide range of organisations which publish information on domestic abuse. *The MCF does not endorse or recommend any of the organisations listed.*

- **Ann Craft Trust**  
National charity aiming to minimise the risk of abuse of disabled children and adults at risk.  
<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/>
- **Ask for ANI**  
If somebody is experiencing domestic abuse and needs immediate help, they can ask for 'ANI' in participating pharmacies. 'ANI' stands for Action Needed Immediately. If a pharmacy has the 'Ask for ANI' logo on display, it means they're ready to help. They will offer a private space, provide a phone and ask if the person needs support from the police or other domestic abuse support services.
- **Galop**  
Run by LGBTQ+ people for LGBTQ+ people, it provides support over the telephone and advocacy services for those needing assistance long-term.  
0800 999 5428  
<https://galop.org.uk/>
- **Independent Domestic Violence Advisors**  
IDVAs provide emotional and practical advice, guidance and support to help anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and their families, to stay safe.  
<https://saferfutures.org.uk/our-programmes/idva/>
- **Local Authorities**  
Contact your Local Authority Safeguarding Team to speak to a social worker about concerns or a disclosure. The local authority may operate a 'one stop shop' for anyone experiencing domestic violence. This offers free and confidential advice, information and support from a range of agencies under one roof.  
<http://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/find-your-nearest-safeguarding-adultsboard/>
- **Men's Advice Line**  
Supports men experiencing domestic abuse.  
0808 8010327  
<https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>
- **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children**  
Specialises in child protection and protecting children from abuse. It is the only UK children's charity with statutory powers, which means it can take action to safeguard children at risk of abuse. If you're worried about a child call;  
0808 800 5000  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

- **Refuge**  
Empowers women and children to rebuild their lives, free from violence and fear. Provides a range of life-saving and life-changing services.  
0808 2000 247  
<https://refuge.org.uk/>
- **Respect Phonenumber**  
Provides support to abusers to help them become safe around partners and children.  
0808 8024040  
<https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/>
- **Women's aid**  
Provides information and support for women and children.  
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

## Other information

### Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides grants and support for Freemasons and their family members. A wide range of help is available for daily living costs; health, care and wellbeing; and education-related costs for children and young people.

Call 0800 035 60 90 or visit [www.mcf.org.uk](http://www.mcf.org.uk)

You may also be interested in the following Masonic Charitable Foundation resources:

### MCF Factsheets

- **Mental health**
- **Trauma and PTSD**
- **Alternative sources of support**

Scan the QR code below or visit [mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources](http://mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources)



Whilst every care has been taken to verify accuracy, the information in this factsheet is for guidance only.

**Last updated / reviewed: November 2023**