

Domestic Violence

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is the abuse of one partner within an intimate or family relationship. It is the repeated, random and habitual use of intimidation to control a partner.

The abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual. Anyone forced to alter their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner's reaction is being abused.

If you are suffering or know of someone else who is suffering from domestic violence then please seek help.

For confidential help and advice you can contact:

The Senior Police Officer – Inspector Alex Hughes

Tel: 00 247 6225

Police.inspector@ascension.gov.ac

The Consultant Social Worker – Alison Blunt

Tel: 00 247 4524

Social.worker@ascension.gov.ac

The Senior Medical Officer – Dr Bill Hardy

Tel: 00 247 6303

Bill.hardy@ascension.gov.ac

In emergencies please contact the police on 999.

Who does it affect?

Domestic violence can happen to anyone, regardless of age, social background, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity.

It happens in all kinds of relationships: heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Statistics show the vast majority of domestic violence incidents are carried out by men and experienced by women.

When does it happen?

It can begin at any stage of the relationship.

Domestic violence is rarely a one-off. Incidents generally become more frequent and severe over time

What causes domestic violence?

- Domestic violence is caused by the abuser's desire for power and control
- It stems from an imbalance of power between the sexes

- It is not caused by alcohol, drugs, unemployment, stress or ill health. These are only excuses or justifications for an abuser's behaviour.
- A combination of factors allows it to continue:
 - individual experiences of both the abuser and the abused (jealousy, fear of abandonment, low self-esteem);
 - society's inadequate response (e.g. failure to prosecute, insufficient housing, lack of childcare, tendency to blame the abused woman);
 - society's stereotypical beliefs and negative attitudes towards the roles of men and women (e.g. "love, honour and obey" and "you made your bed, you lie in it.")
- It continues because men are allowed to get away with it

Domestic violence is a crime. We all have a role to play in ending it.

Recognising abuse

Domestic violence is caused by an abuser's desire to gain power and control over their partner. Abusers use a range of different tactics – physical, emotional, sexual, financial – to achieve this.

This list may help you to identify whether you are experiencing domestic violence:

- Are you afraid of your partner?
- Do you feel isolated? Does he cut you off from family and friends?
- Is he jealous and possessive?
- Does he humiliate or insult you?
- Does he verbally abuse you?
- Does he say you are useless and couldn't cope without him?
- Does he physically hurt you? Does he shove, slap, punch or kick you?
- Has he threatened to hurt you or people close to you?
- Does he constantly criticise you?
- Does he have sudden changes of mood which dominate the household?
- Is he charming one minute and abusive the next? Like Dr Jekyll / Mr Hyde?
- Does he control your money?
- Do you change your behaviour to avoid triggering an attack?
- Are you unsure of your own judgement?
- Does he damage your possessions?
- Does he smash up the furniture?
- Does he threaten to harm or kill the pets?
- Does he threaten to kidnap or get custody of the children?
- Does he drive fast because he knows it scares you?
- Does he lock you out of the house during an argument?
- Does he tell you what to wear or how to do your hair?

Domestic violence takes many different forms.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the most recognisable form of abuse. It can range from a slap or shove to a black eye, cut lip, or broken bone. In the most extreme cases it can result in death.

Physical abuse doesn't always leave visible marks or scars. Having your hair pulled or an egg thrown at you is domestic violence too. Don't underestimate what is happening to you. Over time the violence usually gets worse.

Emotional abuse

Many women experience domestic violence without ever being physically abused. Sometimes they're not sure if what is happening to them is domestic violence. They worry that no-one will take them seriously if they talk about it.

If you alter your behaviour because you are frightened of how your partner will react, you are being abused. Emotional abuse is an attack on your personality rather than your body.

Emotional abuse can be just as harmful as physical abuse. It often leads to physical violence over time.

Sexual abuse

Your partner should not use force or threats to make you have sex. He should not make you perform sexual acts with which you are uncomfortable. He should not criticise your performance.

If he does any of the above, he is using sex to assert his authority and control you.

Financial abuse

One of the most powerful ways a man can control his partner is by using financial abuse.

There are many different forms of financial abuse, but it might include things like your partner taking your money; stopping you from working; placing all the bills or debts in your name; or monitoring how you spend money and other financial resources e.g. the telephone.

If you feel that your partner is limiting your financial independence, you are experiencing financial abuse.

Effects of domestic violence on children

Two thirds of the residents in refuges in the UK are children. They make up some of the most vulnerable children in the country.

The physical, psychological and emotional effects of domestic violence on children can be severe and long-lasting. Some children may become withdrawn and find it difficult to communicate. Others may act out the aggression they have witnessed, or blame themselves for the abuse. All children living with abuse are under stress.

That stress may lead to any of the following:

- Withdrawal
- Aggression or bullying
- Tantrums
- Vandalism
- Problems in school, truancy, speech problems, difficulties with learning
- Attention seeking
- Nightmares or insomnia
- Bed-wetting
- Anxiety, depression, fear of abandonment
- Feelings of inferiority
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders
- Constant colds, headaches, mouth ulcers, asthma, eczema

Many people think that a child who has experienced domestic violence will inevitably become a perpetrator or victim of abuse later in their lives. This is not true.

Many children do cope with and survive abuse, displaying extraordinary resilience. But witnessing or experiencing domestic violence represents one of the most serious risks to children in our society.

No child should have to live with violence or fear.

Further information and help on Domestic Violence can be found at

<http://www.refuge.org.uk>

<http://www.womensaid.org.uk>

<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>