

You don't need to live in
fear of domestic abuse



Domestic Abuse

If you are being threatened or assaulted by someone you live with, that is domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is controlling and aggressive behaviour and includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse – it can happen in all kinds of relationships and for any reason. It is rarely a one-off event. Physical and sexual abuse tends to get more severe and happen more and more over time.

This chain of events needs to be broken and a range of organisations are working to do this, but individuals also have an important part to play. For people experiencing abuse, 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 stamp out abusive and controlling behaviour.

It is important to remember that domestic abuse is a crime and those that commit such crimes must answer for their behaviour. We all have the right to live without fear of violence and abuse.

What can I do?

If you are in an abusive relationship, there are three important steps you can take:

- Acknowledge that what is happening to you is wrong.
- Try to understand that you are not to blame.
- Be aware that help and support is available.

Recognising Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes physical assault, sexual abuse, rape and threats. It may also include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment. Some abusers offer 'rewards' if certain conditions are met or to try and



persuade their partners that the abuse won't happen again. However persuasive they seem, abuse usually gets worse over time.

Domestic abuse may happen to anyone and in all kinds of relationships, for example heterosexual/straight relationships, lesbian or gay relationships, or in relationships where a child is violent towards a parent. People suffer domestic abuse regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, sexuality or lifestyle. Abuse can begin at any time – in new relationships or after many years together.

Accepting you are not to blame

It is not easy to accept that a loved one can behave aggressively. 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 what is supposed to be a caring relationship. It is your abuser's behaviour which needs to change – there is no excuse.

Getting help

The most important thing you can do is tell someone. You may decide quickly and easily to ask for help. Or you may find the process is long and painful as you try to make the relationship work. You may continue to struggle against the practical and emotional reasons for staying in an abusive relationship.

Most people try to find help a number of times before getting what they need and even after leaving the relationship there still may be a risk. Never be afraid to ask for help again and remember, in an emergency, always call the police by dialling 999 (minicom 0800 112 999).

Remember that domestic abuse is a crime and all agencies should work together to wipe out and prevent that crime. We should all work together where we can to protect women, children and men who are suffering because of domestic abuse. It is not simply the responsibility of the victim to end the abuse.

How can I be protected from violence?

Legal protection

Regardless of whether the Police can use criminal law against a violent person, you can still use the civil law to get protection to allow you to live in safety if you feel that this will help.

Under the Family Law Act 1996, many victims of domestic abuse can apply for court orders against their abusers. For example, you can apply for a court order against someone you live with or have lived with (whether or not you have been married), someone you have agreed to marry or someone who shares parental responsibility for a child with you.

These orders can stop the abusive behaviour or, in some cases, prevent the abusive person from entering your home. Courts can attach a power of arrest so that if your abuser does not keep to the order, the Police can take them to court.

If you are on Income Support or have a very low income, you may be able to get public funding (formerly known as legal aid) to pay for legal proceedings and advice from a Solicitor.

You can find out more about legal protection from the Police, a solicitor, your local Magistrates' Court or County Court, a Citizens Advice Bureau or Women's Aid Groups.

Moving Away

If you are being abused by the person you live with, or by someone connected with you such as an ex-partner, you may decide it is best to leave your home. If you have nowhere to go, you can contact any of the helplines detailed in this leaflet, or your housing officer who may be able to help.

Your local council should provide a 24-hour emergency homelessness service. If they feel you are vulnerable because you are at risk of domestic abuse and that it would not be reasonable for you to continue living at your home, they must help you to find somewhere else to live. They may provide you with temporary accommodation such as a place in a hostel, a bed and breakfast or a refuge.

A refuge is a safe house where women, men and children can live free from violence. It offers a temporary breathing space where you can make decisions free from pressure and fear. There are refuges especially for women and children from particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds, for example, Black, Asian, Latin American or Jewish women. Some refuges have access for disabled people and staff trained in special needs.

One of the reasons that many people stay in abusive relationships is because they wonder how they will manage financially if they leave. There are various benefits you may be able to claim and you can claim some of these even if you are working. Your local Social Security Benefits Office will be able to give you advice.



What about the children?

There are frightening links between domestic abuse and child abuse. Children may be injured or abused or at risk of accidental injury and they often suffer indirectly even when they are not directly abused themselves. They 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 your children away for this reason. If you fear your partner will abduct the children, you should get advice as soon as possible. Your local 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 school and related problems. They can also give you advice on how to protect your children and how contact between your children and a violent parent can be restricted or supervised.

How can I help a friend who is experiencing Domestic Abuse?

Unless the person you are trying to help has been very open about the abuse, it may be difficult for you to tell them you know about the problem. However, if someone does confide in you that they are experiencing domestic abuse, there are some basic steps you can take.

- 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 into giving too much detail if they don't want to.
- Be supportive. Say that no-one deserves to be threatened or assaulted, despite what the abuser may have said. 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, it is their decision.
- Ask if they have suffered physical harm. Offer to go with them to the hospital if they need to go. If they want someone to report any abuse 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 abusive 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, look after yourself while you are supporting someone else. 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.

Who can I talk to?

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse, there are a range of organisations that can help. Below are some useful phone numbers but there are many, many others. Ask at your library, local authority or Citizens Advice Bureau for more information.

- National 24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000247
- Victim Support: 0845 3030900
- Shelterline: 0808 8004444
- The Samaritans: 08457 909090
- National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC): 0808 8005000
- Broken Rainbow: A referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people experiencing domestic violence: 0300 9995428
- Rights of Women: An advice line providing free legal advice for women: 0207 2516577
- Men's Advice Line: A confidential freephone helpline for all men experiencing domestic abuse: 0808 8010327



Translation Services. This document is also available in other languages, large print, in Braille and on audio format on request.

Arabic

هذا المستند متوفر بلغات أخرى، وطباعة كبيرة، وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين، وبتسجيل صوتي وذلك عند الطلب من مكتب المحلي.

French

Ce document est disponible dans d'autres langues, en gros caractères, en Braille et en format audio sur demande auprès de votre bureau local.

Polish

Na życzenie, niniejszy dokument dostępny jest w lokalnym biurze w innych językach, wydrukowany dużą czcionką, pisany językiem Brajla lub w wersji dźwiękowej.

Portuguese

Este documento encontra-se disponível em outros idiomas, em letras aumentadas, em Braille e em formato áudio no seu gabinete local.

Punjabi

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਆਫਿਸ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੂਜੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਣੇ ਜਾ ਸਕਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਰੂਪਾਂਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

Somali

Dokumentigaan waxaa lagu heli karaa luqado kale, daabacad far waa-weyn, farta indhoolaha Braille iyo hab la dhegaysan karo markii aad ka soo codsato xafiiska xaafaddaada.

Spanish

Este documento está disponible en otros idiomas, imprenta grande, y en formato Braille o audio. Puede solicitarlo en la oficina de su localidad.

Turkish

Bu belge, yerel ofisinizden talep edilmesi koşuluyla; başka dillerde, büyük puntuyla basılı olarak, Braille alfabesinde ve sesli formatta da mevcuttur.

Urdu

یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں، بڑی چھپائی، بریل اور صوتی شکل میں اپنے مقامی دفتر سے درخواست کر کے حاصل کی جاسکتی ہے۔

Also available



CD



Cassette



Large
print



Different
languages

Guinness South

Henshaw House, 851 Silbury Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3JZ

Tel: 03000 111 321 **Fax:** 01908 609558 **Text Relay:** 18001

Email: gs.mail@guinness.org.uk

Website: www.guinnesspartnership.com