

Safeguarding Theme of the Month: April 2018 – Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse statistics:

- Will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime.
- Leads to, on average, two women being murdered each week and 30 men per year.
- Accounts for 16% of all violent crime (Source: Crime in England and Wales 15/16 report), however it is still the violent crime least likely to be reported to the police
- Has more repeat victims than any other crime (on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police)
- Is the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless (Shelter, 2016)
- In 2016 the Forced Marriage Unit responded to 1735 reports of possible Forced Marriages

Also known as *spousal abuse*, occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called *domestic violence*.

Domestic abuse can include:

- Sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- Punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- Withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- Taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- Not letting someone leave the house
- Reading emails, text messages or letters
- Threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't "play fair." Abusers use fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under his or her thumb. Your abuser may also threaten you, hurt you, or hurt those around you.

Domestic violence and abuse does not discriminate; it happens among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. And while women are more commonly victimized, men are also abused—especially verbally and emotionally, although sometimes even physically as well. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether it's coming from a man, a woman, a teenager, or an older adult. You deserve to feel valued, respected, and safe.

Source: helpguide.org.

How domestic abuse affects children

Mums or dads who suffer domestic abuse don't always realise how it affects their child. They might think that because their child doesn't see what's happening that they're not affected. But we know that living in a home where domestic abuse takes place can be really harmful for a child.

It can have a very serious impact on a child's behaviour and wellbeing, even if they're not directly harmed themselves. Children witnessing domestic abuse is recognised as 'significant harm' in law.

Domestic abuse can also be a sign that children are suffering another type of abuse or neglect. The effects can last into adulthood. But, once they're in a safer and more stable environment, most children are able to recover from the effects of witnessing domestic abuse.

Source: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/domestic-abuse/>

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Support a friend or family member experiencing domestic violence If you know or suspect that a family member, friend or work colleague is experiencing domestic violence, it may be difficult to know what to do. It can be very upsetting that someone is hurting a person you care about. Your first instinct may be to want to protect your friend or family member but intervening can be dangerous for both you and them. Of course, this does not mean you should ignore it. There are things you can do to help make her and any children safer. If you should witness an assault, you can call the police on 999. There are useful contact below, where you can access help and support.

A new domestic violence law came into effect on 29 December 2015, which recognises for the first time that abuse is a complex and sustained pattern of behaviour intended to create fear. The **coercive control offence**, which carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine, can be invoked if a victim suffers serious alarm or distress that impacts on their day-to-day activities, or if they fear violence will be used on at least two occasions. The law change comes in the same month as a report by the police inspectorate which found that **the number of reported crimes associated with domestic abuse increased by 31% in 18 months.**

Organisation	Website/Contact details	What they do
National Domestic Violence helpline	Telephone: 0808 200 0247 (24 hours) Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk (you will receive a response within 3 working days) Website: www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk	The National Domestic Violence Helpline is a freephone 24 hour helpline which provides advice and support to women and can refer them to emergency accommodation.
Refuge	Telephone: 0808 200 0247 (24 hours) Email: info@refuge.org.uk Website: www.refuge.org.uk	This national helpline offers advice and support to women experiencing domestic violence. Refuge provides safe, emergency accommodation through a network of refuges throughout the UK. It also provides culturally-specific services for women from different minority ethnic communities and cultures. Their website has links to specialist organisations, including specialist organisations for refugees. It includes some information for men who are either being abused or who are abusers.
Men's Advice Line	Helpline: 0808 801 0327 The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk Website: www.mensadviceline.org.uk	The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline for all men experiencing domestic violence by a current or ex-partner. This includes all men, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. They provide emotional support and practical advice, and can give you details of specialist services that can give you advice on legal, housing, child contact, mental health and other issues.

FOR YOUR NEXT REVIEW FIND OUT WHICH ORGANISATIONS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO ARE LIVING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/domestic-abuse/>