

What is domestic abuse?



Domestic abuse is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading or violent behaviour, including sexual violence.

Domestic Abuse can happen between partners, ex-partners or family members.

It happens between people of all cultures, backgrounds, religions and social groups regardless of sexual orientation.

The majority of Domestic Abuse is perpetrated by men and experienced by women, however it is important to remember that this is not always the case.

Domestic abuse is about one person exerting power over another, and it often gets worse over time.

The abuse can take place in person or digitally.

TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Some examples of abuse include:

Physical abuse (violence) - includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking, choking and using weapons.

Sexual abuse - being forced or pressured to have sex without consent (rape) or unwanted sexual activity such as touching, groping or being made to watch pornography.

Financial abuse – being prevented from earning, having money, bank accounts and benefits controlled.

Emotional abuse - behaviours directed at the victim which may insult, humiliate, instill fear, shame, guilt or intimidation

Psychological abuse - mind games, gaslighting (manipulative behaviour causing someone to question their own sanity), denying the abuse, blaming the victim for the abuse

Coercive control - can include threatening or controlling behaviour as listed on the next page.



Examples of coercive control -

- Blackmail
- Being constantly criticised or 'checked up on'.
- Being stopped from working or going to school/college/ university
- Being isolated from friends and family
- Having access to food, drinks and day-to-day products restricted
- Having social media accounts monitored or controlled
- Being told what to wear
- Having finances controlled or withheld

- Being threatened with violence for not behaving in a certain way
- Having threats made to loved ones or pets
- Threats of suicide or self-harm
- Extreme jealousy or possessiveness
- Unreasonable demands
- Accusations of flirting or affairs
- Stalking
- Harassment

Coercive control is now a criminal offence under the Serious Crime Act 2015.

Stalking - involves a person becomes fixated or obsessed with another. Stalking is a pattern of persistent and unwanted attention that makes you feel pestered, scared, anxious or harassed. Some examples of stalking are:

- Regularly giving unwanted gifts
- Making unwanted communication
- Damaging property
- Repeatedly following you or spying on you
- Threats

Taken in isolation, some of the behaviours may seem like small acts, but together they make up a consistent pattern of behaviour that is frightening and upsetting.

Online or digital abuse - Online platforms are increasingly used to perpetrate domestic abuse. Online domestic abuse can include behaviours such as monitoring of social media profiles or emails, abuse over social media such as Facebook or Twitter, sharing intimate photos or videos without your consent, using GPS locators or spyware.



Forced Marriages - A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised or abuse is used to force them to do so.

It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic / child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

The pressure put on people to marry against their will may be physical, emotional, financial and /or psychological (for example, making someone feel like they are bringing 'shame' on their family).

Honour Based Abuse - "Honour-based violence" is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to 'protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'.

FGM- female genital mutilation comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons

Other criminal offences that perpetrators of domestic abuse may be charged with include stalking and harassment, sexual assault, rape, common assault, ABH, GBH, manslaughter and murder.

More detailed information and recent statistics regarding
Domestic Abuse can be found at - www.safelives.org.uk

'Why don't they just leave?'

There are many practical and psychological barriers to ending a relationship with an abusive partner. Here are just some:

Safety: fear of greater violence against themselves, children or family

Lack of self-confidence: believing the abuse is their fault, that they deserve the abuse, that they cannot cope without the abuser and that they nobody else will want to be with them.

Denial: being convinced that "it's not that bad"

Shame: being embarrassed about people finding out and being blamed for the failed relationship

Financial dependence: being unable to support themselves and children financially
Lack of support: not knowing who to turn to for help

Religious/community/family beliefs: being under pressure not to break up the family

Love!

Jekyll and Hyde: the abuser switches between charm and rage providing hope that things will improve

Intimidation: the abuser threatens that they or Social Services will take the children away

Immigration: fear of being deported

REMEMBER - It takes a great deal of courage to leave someone who controls and intimidates you.

Leaving an abusive partner can be very dangerous. At the point of separation and shortly afterwards, victims of domestic abuse are at most risk of homicide.

More information about the impact of Domestic Abuse and support for victims of Domestic Abuse can be found at -

www.lancashirevictimservices.org

www.bddwa.org

www.empowermentcharity.org.uk

