

# Domestic violence

Information from  
Victim Support

## What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence involves threats, violence or abuse between people who have a relationship with each other (or have had in the past). It can happen between partners, within families or shared homes, and affects men and women in both straight and gay relationships. It happens between people of all cultures, religions or classes. It's based on one person having power or control over another, and it often gets worse over time.

Some organisations use the word 'abuse' instead of 'violence'. We think of these terms as interchangeable.

Domestic violence takes many forms including physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse, and being cut off from your family and friends. It is very common. The police estimate that they get a call every minute from someone who is a victim of domestic violence. At Victim Support we help around 90,000 victims a year – six times more than ten years ago. Studies show that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence during their life.

Domestic violence is unacceptable. No one deserves to be abused.

## **People who are abused**

Many people who live with domestic violence are able to continue relatively normal lives in very difficult circumstances. Some people find that leaving an abusive relationship (for example by moving away) stops the threats and violence. But unfortunately in some cases, leaving or trying to leave can make things worse.

We know that on average a victim of domestic violence will have been assaulted 35 times before contacting the police.

## **Victim Support can help**

Victim Support is the independent national charity for people affected by crime. Our volunteers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to people who have been threatened or abused.

Our services are confidential, free and available to everyone.

Victims are usually put in touch with us by the police. But you can also contact us directly, whether or not you want to report the crime to the police and regardless of when it happened. We'll help you, whatever decision you make.

If you go to the police our volunteers can accompany you to the police station and to court. They can give you information

about court procedures and applying for compensation. They can also help you to contact other organisations if you need different kinds of help. If you prefer, you can talk to someone anonymously on our Victim Supportline. The details are on the back page of this leaflet.

You can also contact us if you know someone who needs help. Research shows that just under half of victims will tell a relative or friend. Please see the list of things you can do to help others on page 6.

### **How we can help**

A lot of people find it very hard to accept that they are a victim of domestic violence. It can take a long time for someone to admit it to themselves, but it is a vital first step in getting help.

If you are a victim of domestic violence, we want to help you. We will:

- always prioritise your safety and confidentiality if you choose to talk to us
- give you time to think and to make decisions
- offer continuous support regardless of the decisions you make
- put you in touch with other agencies that can help, for example, with housing, benefits and legal advice
- help you to explore the choices that are open to you.

## **The effects on children**

It is important not to underestimate the impact of domestic violence on children. In a large number of cases children are present in the home when a parent is being abused.

We will do everything we can to help abused parents to support their children effectively.

## **Your safety**

If you can't keep this leaflet at home you may want to use the detachable card with telephone helpline numbers on the back page.

All the organisations listed on page 7 will be able to offer information on staying safe.

If you are facing an emergency phone the police on 999.

## How to help others

If you suspect or know that someone is affected by domestic violence you should:

- listen to them and take them seriously
- be there for them, whatever decisions they make
- not judge them
- help them to find support and advice
- not try to intervene or sort out the situation yourself
- respect their need to be secretive
- not expect them to simply leave, because:
  - they may need help to leave safely
  - they may not want to leave
  - they may want the abuser to leave.

Whatever their circumstances it is likely that they may want legal, financial and emotional support.

Do not put yourself in a dangerous position and be careful not to further endanger them. You can contact Victim Support for support and advice.

**If you can do so safely, please remove the card opposite and keep it with you.**

We have left one side of the card blank so you can write the details of local organisations.

## Useful contacts

### **Victim Supportline**

**0845 30 30 900**

Information and support for anyone affected by crime. Can also put you in touch with your local Victim Support branch.

Open 9am to 9pm weekdays, 9am to 7pm weekends, 9am to 5pm bank holidays.

### **National Domestic Violence Helpline**

**0808 2000 247**

A 24-hour freephone service for female victims provided in partnership by Refuge and Women's Aid.

### **Broken Rainbow National Helpline**

**020 8539 9507**

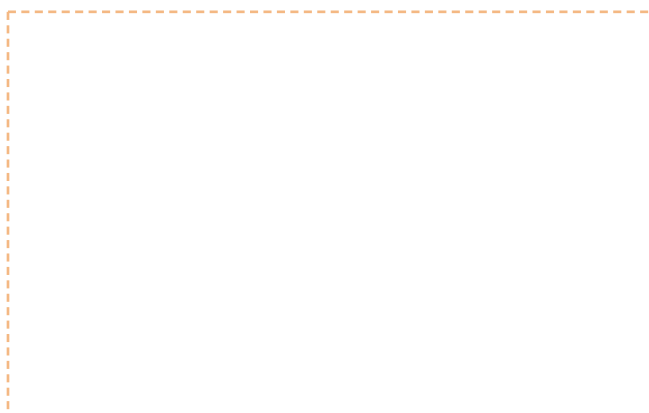
Provides services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic violence.

Open 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm weekdays.

### **Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline**

**0808 80 10 800**

Freephone service run by Welsh Women's Aid open 8am to 2pm and 8pm to 2am daily.



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