



**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
Violence Partnership

Ending Domestic Abuse

A guide for

Mosques

and the Muslim

Community

“Whoever helps his brother in his time of need, Allah swt The Exalted will be there in his time of need” —
Saheeh Muslim

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The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Violence Partnership is made up of key agencies across the county, who play an important role in preventing abuse and increasing the access to services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Details of national and local support organisations are at the end of this booklet.

The Muslim community and the community as a whole have an opportunity and advantage in raising awareness about domestic abuse and sexual violence. Many people do not openly discuss such concerns due to the stigma and taboo within the culture; however modern society and religion promotes healthy and positive relationships; it is important that we raise open and healthy discussions to influence support and empowerment.

This booklet will provide guidance for how support can be provided by the Mosque Community and how victims can obtain support.

This booklet provides us with an opportunity to reflect and consider how we can transform our views on domestic abuse. We believe that faith in Allah Swt The Exalted (God)'s infinite mercy is implemented, through kindness, compassion, and respect. It is about following the way of our messenger Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him), who honoured and respected women, and condemned violence to the young, old, and everyone. We are called to live in a way that reflects this belief.

“Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah Swt The Exalted, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives’ — Surah An-Nisa [4:135]

In the past, all faith communities have taken a stand against hate crime, racism and international crisis. We can also be agents of change for domestic abuse and increasing awareness. We feel this is an opportunity for the Mosques, Imams, Ustadhas (female teachers) and the Muslim community to reach out, access support and to challenge this inexcusable global epidemic of injustice and oppression in our societies.

We are fortunate to be living in a country which not only fulfils our basic necessities but grants us the prospects for education, improving health and wellbeing, and to embrace a culture of understanding, a voice, an opinion and having our rights as individuals respected.

“Indeed, Allah Swt The Exalted, orders justice and good conduct and giving towards relatives and He forbids what is immorality, blameworthy and oppressive. He reaches you, so that you may take heed.” — Surah An-Nal [16:90]

Thank you

Jazak'Allah Khayr
(May God reward you with goodness)

This booklet was written by Anisa Masood with input and guidance from Imam Mohammed Rashid. We would also like to thank Ms Preet Kaur, Director of It's My Right-No Forced Marriages, for reviewing the guide in 2021.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Definition of Domestic Abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;
- and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.
- (4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—
- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - (b) obtain goods or services.
- (5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).
- (6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.
- (7) For the meaning of “personally connected”, see section 2.

2. Definition of “personally connected”

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—
- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
 - (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
 - (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
 - (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));
 - (g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section—

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

3. Children as victims of domestic abuse

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who—

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if—

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section—

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Domestic abuse is not specific to any religious groups or communities. It can affect any gender, any age, any race, religion, culture or background.

The findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (year ending March 2018) stated 7.9% of women (1.3 million) and 4.2% of men (695,000) experienced domestic abuse.

Whilst we cannot generalise the factors for domestic abuse, i.e, ethnic background/religion, the findings from 2018 state that Christian women (5.7%) were more likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than Muslim women (2.9%) and Hindu women (1.8%). However, it is felt there are many cases which are unreported; we understand there is cultural stigma, blame, fear of repercussions, and this is what we are challenging, it is important that you put your safety and wellbeing first.

Madhani, *et al* (2017) did a community-based observational study with 1325 Pakistani women, none of them accessed professional help due to fear of abuse escalating and the ongoing societal stigma. Therefore, it is important for all readers to know that there is a great deal of support and expertise advice available; professionals are there to help you understand what you're going through and to stop you or other people from getting hurt. Any relationship from all faiths or beliefs should be of one which is a healthy, loving and empowering relationship for two people. Conflict and disagreements are sometimes inevitable, but there are ways to resolve concerns or issues, through effective communication, patience and compassion. Those which transgress that are oppressive and abusive and should be dealt with professionally and legally.

The Islamic view on domestic violence is emphasised through the Qur'an (Holy Book) and through the Sunnah (The way of the Prophet, (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him)). Islam forbids any and all kinds of abuse, injustice or oppression, no matter how small it may be perceived, which includes saying a bad word or raising one's hand against another person.

"The best amongst you are those who have best manners and character" — Bukhari

The Qur'an and Sunnah evidently express the tranquil, kind and loving relationship between a husband and wife. If you are having difficulties individually or within your marriage, speak to a professional or an Imam, they have specialist training to support you. However, in the case of domestic abuse, anyone in immediate danger should contact the police and seek support from specialist organisations (see Useful numbers at the end of this booklet). By increasing the Mosques' committees and management teams' understanding of violence against women, men and young people, we can influence change.

1.1 USING THIS RESOURCE

This is not an all-inclusive resource. The information contained will not equip individual Imams, Mosque leaders or members to be able to respond fully to the needs of those who are suffering or have endured aspects of domestic violence, or to work with those who are perpetrating violence. However, it aims to:

- Increase awareness in Mosques and Muslim communities of the reality and consequences of domestic violence. This could be delivered through the Jummah Khutbah (Friday Sermon), teaching children and young people at Madrassa's about healthy relationships and what to do if they notice unhealthy patterns or negativity at home. Nour DV are a charity who provide Muslim men and women with support on domestic abuse. Nour DV have a template of a sermon that can be used on Fridays to deliver at the Jummah prayers.
- Encourage Mosques to take necessary measures towards being recognised as places where domestic abuse is taken seriously, and victims are believed.
- Endorse the understanding and importance of referring victims of domestic abuse to specialist organisations and to encourage Mosques to support the work of these

organisations. To recognise any barriers such as language, disability or stigma and to provide reasonable adjustments.

Terminology: This publication uses the words 'victims' and 'abusers/perpetrators' for both females and males respectively, as this is currently the widespread presentation of domestic abuse.

The terms 'domestic violence', 'domestic abuse' and 'intimate partner violence' are used interchangeably in this publication, these are commonly used within this sector.

Research indicates that the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women, but domestic abuse can be inflicted by any gender.

1.2 SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS:

Forced Marriage:

- A Forced Marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage, and duress is involved. This is inclusive to adults with learning or physical disabilities that are unable to consent. Duress can include physical violence, psychological, financial, sexual, emotional blackmail and threats.

Honour Based Violence/Crime:

- The terms 'Honour Crime' or 'Honour Based Violence' or 'Izzat' (honour/pride) embrace a variety of crimes including assault; false imprisonment, and also murder, (It is mainly, but not exclusive to women.) where the person is punished for actually or allegedly breaking/undermining the correct code of conduct that upholds the status quo/social standing of their family and/or community. In transgressing this correct code of conduct, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform to the standards by their family and this brings 'shame' or 'dishonour' to the family.
- Therefore, the term 'Crimes of Honour' encompasses a variety of manifestations of violence against victims, including murder, (termed 'Honour Killings'), assault, confinement/false imprisonment, interference with choice in marriage or sexuality.

The Difference between a Forced Marriage and an Arranged Marriage:

- There is a clear distinction between the two. In arranged marriages, the spouses have the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement of marriage and are happy for their families to take the leading roles in decision making or arranging the marriage.
- In a forced marriage, one or both spouses do NOT consent to the marriage and duress is involved in terms of physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

Vulnerable Adult/Adult at Risk of Abuse

- A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18yrs and above, who is or may need of community care services by reason of mental or physical disability, and is unable to care for themselves or does not have the capacity to consent nor protect themselves, therefore, making them vulnerable to significant harm or exploitation.

1.3 TYPES OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse

Any intentional and unwanted contact to you or something close to your body. Sometimes this does not cause pain or is not visible, but it's still unhealthy.

Examples include:

- Scratching, punching, biting, strangling or kicking
- Throwing objects at you i.e. phone, shoe, book
- Pulling your hair
- Pushing or pulling you
- Grabbing your clothing
- Using a gun, knife, box cutter, bat or other weapon
- Smacking your bottom without your permission or consent
- Forcing you to have sex or perform a sexual act
- Grabbing your face to make you look at them
- Physically holding you to prevent you from leaving or to force you to go somewhere

Emotional Abuse

This does not leave physical evidence, however, it is damaging and scarring. The impact of emotional abuse can chip away at your sense of self.

Examples include:

- Name calling and swearing
- Manipulation
- Ignoring you
- Putting you down
- Threats and intimidation
- 'Gas lighting', i.e. making you feel like you're going mad
- Controlling her every move through threats and intimidation
- Anger
- Playing mind games
- Humiliation
- Mocking
- Emotionally blackmailing

Sexual

Approximately 90% of those who are raped know the perpetrator prior to the offence.

Examples include:

- Rape
- Being forced into sexual activity without consent
- Being persuaded/coerced into sex, e.g, “if you love me you will do this”
- Withholding access to contraception
- Being forced into sexual acts that are inappropriate and degrading
- Using alcohol or drugs without your consent to have sex with you

Coercive and Controlling

- Isolating a person from their friends and family/grooming
- Depriving them of their basic needs
- Monitoring what they do
- Using surveillance or spyware to track them
- Taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep
- Depriving them access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services
- Family ‘dishonour’ or reputation
- Preventing person from attending work or university or school
- Threats to hurt them, children, pet or someone else
- Threats to kill

Financial and Economic

No one has the right to control or limit your finances and how you spend your money.

Examples include:

- Giving you an allowance and closely watching what you buy
- Placing your work salary in their account and denying you access to it
- Keeping you from seeing shared bank accounts or records forbidding you to work or limiting the hours you do
- Preventing you from going to work by taking your car or keys
- Getting you fired by harassing you, your employer or co-workers
- Using your credit cards without your permission
- Refusing to give you money, food, rent, medicine or clothing (for yourself or children)
- Using their money to hold power over you because they know you are not in the same financial situation as they are
- Saving their finances secretly and forcing you to use your finances for everything

Online and Digital

This is the use of technology or social media to abuse you. Examples include:

- Bully, harassing or stalking. This is usually verbal abuse
- Saying who you can or can't be friends with on social media
- Sending you negative, insulting or even threatening emails, messages, tweets, direct messages (DMs) or other messages online
- Using social media to spy on you
- Sending you unwanted, explicit pictures and/or demanding you send some in return
- Pressuring you to send explicit video or 'sexts'
- Stealing or insisting on being given your passwords
- Constantly texting you and making you feel like you can't be separated from your phone for fear that you will be punished
- Looking through your phone frequently, checking up on your pictures, texts and outgoing calls
- Using any kind of technology (such as spyware or GPS in a car or on a phone) to monitor you
- Using their friends or families as spyware networks to keep an eye and report your activities

Harassment and Stalking

- Text messages
- Voicemails
- Videos
- Letters, photos and cards
- Unwanted items or gifts
- Social media friend requests
- Emails
- Stalking, using friends or family for example; relatives can be taxi drivers, who can spy on your movements and keep the perpetrator informed.

Although every situation is different, we need to understand the factors which help us to recognise domestic abuse. This includes:

- Pressure tactics: taking items away (mobile phone/laptop/other devices), threatening to prevent access to money, the car, limiting or removing access to children, lying to your family/friends about you, threatening to call the police, social services or mental health team if you do not meet with his/her requests
- Breaking trust: constantly lying to you, having other relationships/ affairs, breaking agreements/promises, not sharing information with you, being secretive

- Threats: making angry gestures, shouting at you, damaging items, breaking things, using items as a weapon, threatening to harm/kill you, the children, pets and also threatening suicide
- Disrespect: not listening to you, putting you down in front of others, refusing to help you at home, interrupting you and your daily routine, not listening to you, or responding when you're speaking

1.4 How did the Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him) challenge abuse?

- He challenged abuse verbally and through acting upon this
- He empowered women, through highlighting their rights as wives, mothers, and daughters; through education, inheritance, social and political services, financial responsibility and so much more
- He empowered good deeds and a lifestyle which is positive and healthy in a spiritual, mental and emotional sense
- His character was of the Qur'an, described by Aisha (Ra) as all verses of grace and ethics.

1.5 Men and Domestic Abuse

If you are a Muslim man who has endured or you are a survivor of domestic abuse; you are not alone. There are many men who have encountered this. It may be helpful to speak to an Imam or counsellor.

There is a lot of helpful advice at:

- www.mensadvice.org.uk/ Tel; 0808 801 0327
- www.mankind.org.uk Tel; 01823334244
- www.refuge.org.uk
- www.helpguide.org
- www.mensaid.co.uk

Remember, one of the best advices Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be upon Him) gave was:

"A strong person is the one who can control themselves at the time of anger"
– this doesn't mean we shouldn't stand up to negativity, hostility or abuse.

There many myths and misconceptions that:

- 'Domestic abuse cannot happen to men'
Truth: it affects anyone and everyone
- 'Men who experience abuse are 'weak' or not considered men'
Truth: it takes a lot of strength to tolerate abuse and to not retaliate
- 'The law only safeguards and protects women'
Truth: both men and women have the same rights in relation to domestic abuse

It is important to manage an intense emotion like anger, it means that we can think and act rationally. We are allowed to express anger in a healthy way, such as going for a walk, having some space, listen to some Qur'an or anything soothing and then returning to address the situation.

If we let anger control us, it can backfire on us, it can hurt or affect others verbally/physically; thus, destroying our relationships, livelihood, and our relationship with Allah Swt The Exalted. Anger is a natural and normal emotion and managing this in a healthy way is a sign of righteousness.

That said, anger is not the cause of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is caused by one person wanting to have power and control over another. Anger management and 'couples' or 'relationship' therapy is not suitable for domestic abuse situations and can put the victim in more danger.

2. FORCED MARRIAGES & SPOTTING THE SIGNS:

Although Forced Marriage is primarily an issue of violence against women, it is also perpetuated where sexuality in men raises a concern to the family honour. Forced Marriage can NOT be justified on religious grounds; every faith condemns it, and free consent is a prerequisite of all religions.

- Forced Marriage *"is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties, where duress is a factor"*
- Consent is essential to ALL marriages. *"A person knows when they are being forced into a marriage against their will – THAT must be the starting point"*. Only the spouses will know if they give their consent freely. Therefore, if families have to resort to any type of violence or emotional pressure to make someone marry, that person's consent has not been given freely, therefore it's a forced marriage.

Parents/families/communities who force their children to marry often justify their behaviour as protecting their children, building stronger families, and/or preserving cultural or religious traditions.

2.1 Motives for Forced Marriage:

Often, parents/families believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home countries, when in fact practices and values may have changed. Some parents come under significant pressure from extended families or community to marry their children early. In other cases, an agreement may have been made about a marriage when the child was only an infant. Many young people live their entire childhood with the expectation that they will have to marry a spouse chosen by their families, without being aware that they have a right to choose. Some of the key motives are:

- Controlling unwanted behaviour (perceived promiscuity, westernised values)
- Sexuality (being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender)

- Controlling behaviour that is perceived to be western, for example, alcohol, drug use, wearing make-up, night clubs,
- Preventing unsuitable relationships that are seen to be outside of the ethnical, cultural, religious or caste
- Protecting family honour or “izzat”
- Responding to peer/family/community pressure
- Attempting to strengthen family links (marrying within the family to maintain the ‘honour’
- Ensuring land, property and wealth assets remain within the family
- Protecting perceived cultural ideas/norms
- Protecting perceived religious ideals
- Ensuring care for a child or vulnerable adult with special needs
- Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenships
- Long standing family commitments

2.2 Aggravating factors

There are factors that increase the risk of someone being forced to marry, such as;

- Bereavement in the family that is used as emotional black mail to pressure the child to marry
- Where the setting of a family contains of single parenting or step parenting
- Sometimes, where the elder child (mostly daughter) refuses to marry, the younger female siblings are forced to marry to keep the honour or fulfil the original contract
- Risk of being forced to marry where sexual abuse has been disclosed and it brings shame on the family, in order to restore family honour.
- Risk of being forced to marriage if sexuality is discovered and honour is at stake. Parents may also do so, out of a mistaken belief that this will ‘cure’ their child of what they perceive to be abnormal sexual practices.

2.3 The Victim

When there is the risk of a forced marriage, it takes the collusion of the family, extended family and the community to isolate the victim. The victim feels that they cannot trust anyone to speak about their situation. These feelings of isolation are very similar to those experienced by victims of domestic abuse and child abuse.

In many cases, victims of forced marriages are withdrawn from education at an early stage and may be taken abroad to their parents’ home countries (restricting their freedom and personal development) to get them married off. In UK, many girls face this threat during the summer holidays as they are the year’s longest holiday and this will not necessarily raise concern from the school.

Many victims are subjected to violence, threats to be disowned, be harmed or killed and also a lot of emotional black mail. This may pressure them to not go against the wishes of their families, consequently, suffering from depression, anxiety or self-harm and other behavioural issues.

Where the victim has learning or physical disabilities, or their care needs make them entirely dependent on their carers, it adds to the risk because they are not able to report or leave the abuse. In addition, the abuser is usually with them at all potential opportunities to seek help (ie medical appointments).

2.4 Consequences

When a victim is forced to marry a victim may :

- Find it difficult to initiate any action to end the marriage, especially if they have been taken out of the country
- Be subjected to repeated rape and ongoing domestic violence if they refuse to consummate the marriage
- Forced to have children as a source of security and restoring honour
- Be subjected to emotional abuse and blackmail to diminish their esteem and emotional security. In some cases, victims are brought up to be dependent and would have no experience of life outside the family or not be aware that help exists
- Attempt to commit suicide, self-harm or develop severe mental health issues
- Have an immense negative impact on children within the marriage where they may learn that violence is okay or justified.
- Reduce impact of support due to isolation, especially for women, which might make them return to the abusive situation.
- Increase risk to harm from family if the victim approaches statutory agencies to report the abuse, thus, bringing shame and dishonour to the family/community
- Attempt to run away.
- Be the victim of an Honour Killing.

2.5 Warning Signs and Indicators

Both men and women facing forced marriage may become anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn, with self – esteem issues. Some examples that could be made aware to you are:

EDUCATION

- Absence and persistent absence
- Withdrawn from school
- Failure to return from visits to country of origin
- Fear about forthcoming holidays
- Surveillance by siblings/cousins at school
- Decline in behaviour, engagement, performance or punctuality
- Not allowed to attend extracurricular activities
- Sudden announcement of engagement to a stranger
- Prevented from going on to further/higher education

HEALTH

- Accompanied to the doctor
- Self-harm
- Attempted suicide
- Eating disorders
- Depression
- Isolation
- Substance misuse
- Early pregnancy
- Female Genital Mutilation

FAMILY HISTORY

- Siblings forced to marry
- Early marriage of siblings
- Self harm or suicide of siblings
- Death of parent
- Family disputes
- Running away from home
- Unreasonable restrictions such as house arrest/financial

POLICE

- Victim or other siblings reported missing
- Reports of abuse/harassment/breaching peace at home/rape or kidnap
- Breaching forced marriage protection orders
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Victim reported for offences
- Threats to kill
- Attempts to kill or harm
- Acid attacks

EMPLOYMENT

- Poor performance and attendance
- Limited career choices
- Not allowed to work or be flexible
- Escorted to and fro from home and work
- Unable to attend business trips or functions
- Subject to financial control

2.6 Always Remember

The “One Chance” Rule:

- If a victim approaches you, please be aware that this might be the **ONLY** chance they have to approach a person with trust and you may only have one chance to speak to the potential victim and/or save their life.

- This means that all practitioners working within statutory agencies need to be aware of their responsibilities when they come across forced marriage cases.
- You can consult with the Forced Marriage Unit in case the victim is at threat to be taken overseas and happens to be a British Citizen. This can help prevent taking the prospective victim out of the country.

3. WHAT CAN IMAMS DO TO ERADICATE ABUSE?

Imams, students of knowledge, and the Muslim community collectively can take practical steps in minimising abuse and domestic violence. Imams do not just teach Islam; they are ambassadors for the community, who should be there to listen, to guide, support and empower. The approach should be non-judgemental, compassionate, understanding and open-minded.

- The first step is to distinguish cultural stigmas against religious beliefs. Both men and women should feel listened to, the feelings of guilt, self-doubt or shame should be removed. Bear in mind the worst possible outcome for domestic abuse is that a life or lives can be lost; it is better that an individual is divorced, or that the perpetrator is imprisoned; we shouldn't compromise community or family shame for the sake of human rights, a healthy life and more importantly a promise to Allah Swt The Exalted, at a human level.
- Provide spiritual support, encourage victims to access professional services or the police if there is immediate danger.
- Have safeguarding policies in place, have a 'safe word' on a poster in the Masjid bathrooms/cloak rooms, e.g, "Ask for Aisha or Ali"— this could be a code phrase to indirectly hint that a person is experiencing abuse
- In the long run: provide faith-specific counsellors based at the Masjid on certain days of the week.
- Let the Masjid be a first point place of refuge, ensure there is spare bedding, food, clean clothes in case of emergency and be aware of other support organisations that provide accommodation.
- Keep an open and fair attitude towards resolving key issues because in some cases, Religion is used as a tool to garner manipulation and diminish hope for help

4. MYTHS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE

We all have attitudes, beliefs, or ideas about domestic abuse. A lot of these are incorrect and can be based on myths about what domestic abuse is and who is most affected by it. The aim of the list below is to challenge common misconceptions.

- ***“Why doesn't the abused person just leave?”***

When a person is in a situation of abuse, there is an assumption that they can easily leave. This is often not the case and nor is this straightforward. An abusive person will have established a pattern of coercive control. Statistically, the time someone is most at risk of being murdered is when they are trying to leave an abuser; therefore, leaving can be very

dangerous. The question we could replace this with is “Why don’t they stop?” Within cultural stigmas, there is an idea of couples staying together for the sake of the children and the reputation of the family. Being married to someone means there is a long term attachment and victims may hope the perpetrator can change. It is important to reinforce that Allah Swt The Exalted, does not tolerate abuse from anyone and you have the right to feel safe and free from harm.

Reality: Choosing to leave is complicated and it is important you can plan this safely (see page 19); but it is the first step in leaving a toxic environment. Sometimes it can take several attempts to finally leave. Organisations such as ‘Refuge’ and ‘Women’s Aid’ provide accommodation for victims and their children for as long as required.

- ***“It doesn’t happen in our community or the Mosques”***

Domestic abuse does occur across all communities. Unfortunately, a minority of Imams, and religious leaders have also been found to be abusers, this has been prevalent across different faiths abusing their power.

Reality: Confiding in someone you trust is important. As it a safeguarding issue, the perpetrator no matter what their profession or status is must be reported to the authorities. If you are a colleague or relative of a perpetrator, you must speak out and ask for professional advice.

- ***“It happened because he was drunk/angry/made redundant”***

Whilst Islam prohibits alcohol and drugs, we need to accept that our Muslim brothers and sisters have freewill, they may practice some parts of their faith more than others. Allah Swt The Exalted, knows best; and as a community we can advise, guide and show support in helping them to address unhealthy habits and addictions. Domestic abuse is sometimes thought to be caused by alcohol or drug misuse; unemployment; mental or physical health problems; stress; or abuse as a child.

Reality: Whilst any or all of these may be a trigger, they are not the primary cause of domestic violence. Also, domestic violence is not about being angry or ‘losing control’. It is about being in control to harm others. Women are often bruised on parts of their body that are not usually visible and are abused in private, so the fact that a man can be selective about where and when he harms his partner tells us that he is making a conscious choice.

- ***“She must have done something to provoke him”***

Often a man may tell his partner that she ‘made’ him do it, and a lot of victims have been asked, “What did you do to let things get this bad?”

Reality: Abuse is a choice. A woman is never responsible if a man chooses to become abusive. This myth dangerously places the blame on the victim rather than on the person responsible for the abuse. It is always the perpetrator at fault.

- ***“It can’t be that bad; she must be exaggerating”***

It is important to believe a victim of abuse when they disclose it to you, as you may be the first person they share sensitive information with. Showing disbelief or suggesting they are exaggerating may stop the victim from accessing help and their safety may be at risk. Confidentiality is key, even if the perpetrator is known.

Reality: Most women or men living in threatening and controlling situations are reluctant to admit what is happening to them for many reasons, including the shame of being abused; “what will people say?” is a huge stigma within the cultural South-Asian communities, but instead should be empowered by Imams and the Muslim community to seek support. Islam encourages helping others when distressed, to listen, to be an advocate of justice and to challenge the wrong in society.

- ***“He is a Muslim and is repentant, it won’t happen again,”***

Although it is possible for perpetrators to change and be transformed through realising their actions, it is not always the case. Often a perpetrator will appear repentant or appear to become a Muslim for his abuse to continue.

Reality: Change or piety cannot always be taken at face value. Keep in mind that many traditional and cultural aspects are patriarchal, therefore misogyny is prevalent. To ascertain whether repentance or conversion is genuine, it should be measured over a long period of time, and must involve consulting regularly with the victim, as she/he is most likely to see if change truly has taken place. So, look into setting up a continuous support system that will help with rehabilitation.

- ***“Marriage is ‘for better or worse,’”***

Marriage vows or the Nikah contract that endorse the idea that you are committed to staying with each other ‘for better or worse’ is used to further pressurise an abused woman into staying with her spouse.

Reality: Islam states there is no tolerance for abuse or oppression: Some women feel if they took a promise to love him and fulfil his rights as his wife, they need to stay with him even when things go from bad to worse – and even when their life is in danger. Addressing issues safely is important and divorce is permissible in instances of abuse, injustice and legitimate reasons, this should also not be perceived as a taboo notion. Every man or woman has the right to be in a healthy and happy marriage. To dismiss or ignore a woman’s suffering because she is married to an abuser and say to that she must ‘put up with it’, underestimates the seriousness of abuse. It is very dangerous to dismiss abuse as a ‘normal marital problem’ or use religion as a deterrent to access support or help.

- ***“Domestic abuse is a personal/family matter, and we shouldn’t interfere.”***

Many people think that what happens in the home is private, and not their problem, this is applicable to victims and survivors who are spouses, children or parents. This is a significant issue within the Muslim and cultural communities, as there is a fear, blame and shame of the idea that, “if someone else knows about this, it will affect our family name/honour”.

Reality: First and foremost, we should put our own wellbeing first, if an individual is being abused by their spouse, parent, sibling or anyone –their safety should be a priority. If safe and deemed appropriate, marital counselling from an Imam or a professional therapist may be helpful. However, in instances of direct abuse the police or domestic abuse organisations should be contacted.

Domestic violence – abusing, hurting, assaulting or raping another person – is a criminal offence and therefore a public matter. It affects the victim, their children and everyone around them.

5. HOW CAN VICTIMS/SURVIVORS FIND SUPPORT AND HELP?

5.1 Support is available.

We are aware that abusive relationships are complex and difficult to process. The victims may feel they still have a duty to the perpetrator who may be their spouse, parent or even a child. A victim with young children may be worried about her children, reputation and marriage. Islam does not tolerate any form of abuse and you have the right to feel emotionally, mentally and physically safe and healthy. Once that step is taken, the process of healing and finding practical support is an effective choice.

5.2 Safety planning:

- Plan how you would deal with certain situations and consider what options you have.
- Keep a detailed diary if it is out of the perpetrator's reach or download an app called 'BrightSky' it looks and functions like a weather app, but it is a discreet app for documenting events, incidents and you can also upload pictures and videos.
- Have a touch-base friend, neighbour or relative who can contact you daily if possible or check up on you every 2-3 days, someone you have constant contact with will notice your absence.
- Have a code word your children and relatives understand in case of emergency – you can text this to them or verbally inform them in person.
- Keep an 'If I go missing folder', containing bank information, copies of ID, all your passwords, contact numbers, list of people you are in contact with in case you went missing. Give this folder to a couple of trusted people in your life who will immediately contact the police if they suspected danger. If you have a password protected phone or email address, keep electronic copies of these too.
- Keep important documents together such as passport, other ID, financial documents, and have some money aside for taxis, train fares or food in case you choose to leave.
- Have an emergency bag packed leave this at a trusted neighbour, friend or relative's house.
- Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency and what to say (i.e, name, contact number, address).

- Rehearse and have an escape plan, so you and your children are able to leave in urgency.
- If you are worried about social services and your children. Remember social services aim to keep children and their families together at all times. They want to make sure you are safe and can help you find ways to cope effectively. Children experience domestic abuse too. So, do not be worried, if the perpetrator is making threats (even using your mental health against you to instil fear) about contacting the social services, the police, the law, and social services are aware that perpetrators are manipulative and controlling. Schools have a designated family worker and safeguarding leads who can give you advice.
- If you are isolated or don't have a mobile phone, have relatives and friends you trust to check up on you regularly, daily if possible. Or every 2-3 days and if there is any risk, they can contact the police on your behalf. Or, even help you with getting a mobile phone and different sim card that you can switch to silent and hide it.
- The first time a perpetrator hurts you physically should be the last time. If there is a repetitive cycle of abuse, please speak to an advisor (see Appendix).
- If you anticipate that the perpetrator will hurt you, identify a safe area in the house, such as a room with windows, doors or a phone, avoid kitchens or areas where they are likely to be sharp objects knives and anything that can be used as a weapon.

5.3 Preparing to leave,

Leaving your partner is an option and opportunity you can take in leaving the abuse, you deserve to live freely and safely. Plan this carefully, as sometimes there may be a heightened risk if the abusers are aware you are leaving or have left. Deciding to leave may not instantly end the abuse. Planning does not mean you have to carry this through instantly, but you are aware of what you can do. Here are some things you can do when preparing to leave:

- Have a spare key and car keys, if possible, give a copy of these to a trusted person but ensure you can get to these quickly. Keep your emergency essentials for you and your children with you.
- Plan to leave at a time you know your partner will not be around, such as the between time they are at work. If you collect or drop the children to school, make the school aware of what is happening, and they will support you in ensuring the perpetrator doesn't know any information you do not wish to share.
- Think about relocating to a place they cannot find you, so you have time to prepare, because it is normally advised that victims do not stay in the area where the abuse has happened. This is to reduce the risk factors.

5.4 Staying safe after leaving:

If you wish to disclose the abuse to trusted family or friends, that is your choice. But it may be beneficial to inform places of work, GPs, schools, gyms in case the perpetrator tries to obtain information or visit you.

- If you stay with a family or friend, note whether the perpetrator will contact them or attend that address. Several organisations provide accommodation and you can stay with them for as long as required.
- If you have been hurt, go to the hospital and let the police know, as this is evidence should you decide to immediately press charges or do this at a later date. The police won't do anything without your permission unless they feel others are at risk or there is serious danger.
- Avoid places where you are vulnerable or isolated, if possible, go to a location where the perpetrator won't suspect and ensure you are not entirely secluded.
- Ensure there are safety measures in place: locks, alarms, CCTV, steel doors, and smoke detectors.
- Keeping your contact address confidential get a PO box and you may be able to register for anonymity.
- Ensure your location settings are turned off when using social media or if out with friends.
- Change your route to work, schools, hospitals and try to avoid shops or places you regularly visit.
- If you have regular appointments, change the times and location.
- If possible, switch your bank account, if you have a joint bank account your bank can temporarily freeze your account. Cancel any unused subscriptions.
- Change passwords and pin numbers for everything and ensure your address isn't on any legal paperwork.
- Try to avoid going to places alone or being in secluded areas, i.e, large car parks.

6. HOW CAN THE MOSQUES RESPOND?

This section looks at:

The Mosques are a place of worship, love, kindness calling people to goodness and having a community to support others. We cannot underestimate the influence and responsibility we have in transforming communities. We can be either part of the problem or part of the solution. We are challenging all stigma, the Imam's and Aalimah's have specialist domestic abuse training, with a non-judgemental and compassionate approach. They are there to listen, support and sign post you to the best services.

6.1 Dos and Don'ts in responding to victims

DOs in responding to victims:

- Find a safe place to speak confidentially
- Have another person present – if this is acceptable to the victim
- Allow time and patience for the person
- Listen to what they are saying – take this seriously
- Believe him/her; the description of the abuse is probably only the 'tip of the iceberg'
- Give priority to his/her immediate safety (if there are any children involved), i.e. ask them if another family member or friend can collect them from school

- Empower them to make their own choices
- Support and respect their choices. Even if she/he chooses initially to return to the abuser, it is their choice. She/he has the most information about how to survive and cope. If there are children involved, however, their safety must come first and this choice is often overruled
- Give them information about relevant support agencies, if appropriate, offer to contact an agency on their behalf and do it in their presence, or offer a safe and private place from where they can also contact the agency
- Reassure them that they are not at fault, no one deserves this and this is not Allah Swt The Exalted's will for someone to be suffering
- Let them know that what the abuser is doing/has done is wrong and completely unacceptable
- Be patient with them
- Protect their confidentiality. Keep any information in a secure place and consider protecting the information with a password

DON'Ts in responding to victims;

- Do not be judgemental
- Refrain from making unrealistic promises or comments which are unnecessary
- Do not suggest that the victim should 'try again'; evidence shows that victims experience a number of violent incidents before seeking help
- Never minimise the severity of their experience or the danger they are in
- Do not react with disbelief, disgust or anger, or react passively.
- Do not ask them why they did not act in a certain way
- Never blame the victim
- Never act on the person's behalf without their consent and/or knowledge (unless children are involved)
- Do not expect them to make decisions quickly
- Never make decisions for them
- Do not use your position as an important person to interfere or recommend couple counselling/family mediation/marriage courses/healthy relationships courses. These will not help in domestic abuse situations, due to high risk
- Do not encourage direct forgiveness for the abuser and taking the person back
- Do not send them home with a prayer/directive to submit to the husband/wife or bring them to the Mosque to be a better Muslim spouse
- Do not contact the victim at home, unless this has been agreed
- Do not approach the partner for their idea of the story, as this will endanger them
- Do not give information about the whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser
- Never discuss the situation with other Mosque leaders who might inadvertently/unintentionally pass information to the abuser
- Do not encourage dependence on you or become emotionally involved; this can be problematic and make you seem to be the answer to their problems

6.2 Dos and Don'ts in responding to perpetrators

- Do not go to them to confirm the victim's story
- Do not meet them in secret, alone or in private
- Never approach a perpetrator or let them know that you know about their violence. If they are to be approached, this should be by a trained professional and should be:
 - a) with the victim's permission and awareness
 - b) in the certainty that their partner is safely separated from them.
- Do not allow him to use religious excuses for their behaviour
- Do not recommend couples counselling for them and their partner, if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship
- Never give any information about their partner or whereabouts, if she/he has left him/her
- Do not be taken in by them minimising the abuse, denying he/she was abusive or lying about the abuse or making things seem like they aren't "that serious"
- Do not be taken in by their 'conversion' experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as they proceed with accountability. If it is not genuine, it is only another way of manipulating you and the system and maintaining control of the process to avoid accountability
- Do not advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of his violence
- Do not provide a character witness for any legal proceedings
- Do not forgive an abuser quickly and easily
- Do not confuse their guilt, sadness or remorse with true repentance

DOs in responding to perpetrators

- Regard the victim's safety (and that of any children) as the highest priority but don't disclose their location
- Meet them in a public area or in the Mosque with several other people, if meeting him/her is appropriate
- Understand that he/she alone is responsible for the way they are behaving and being abusive is a CHOICE
- Ensure any actions you take are victim-centred and do not lose sight of the abuse they have perpetrated. Be particularly alert if they claim that they are also a victim, as this has been used as a tactic of control
- If no longer in the relationship, only speak to them if the partner is in a safe environment and the abuser is not able to harass them (either personally or electronically by text, etc.), and the partner has given you permission to speak the abuse
- Maintain awareness of the danger they may pose to you, to other people and especially to the victim, their children and their wider family
- Research treatment programmes and services such as RESPECT to help them change their behaviour
- Find ways to collaborate with the police, probation and other services to hold the abuser accountable

- Address any religious rationalisations they may offer or questions they may have
- Tell them that the abuse can only stop if they are willing to stop, and that you are willing to help, or to find someone who can
- Take seriously any murder threats they may make and inform the police, and, if they involve the victim, the children or the family, also inform the victim
- Remember that domestic abuse is always the responsibility of the perpetrator

Other steps you can take:

- Ensure there are safeguarding procedures and policies in the Mosque
- Ensure that those teaching and working with children, have an awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and all Mosque leaders and staff have safeguarding training
- If victims/survivors ask for support, ensure they are signposted in the best way
- If you are a family, friend or colleague of a victim or survivor please act on your concerns and encourage them to get help

6.3 REAL LIFE CASE STUDIES:

Domestic abuse:

- ‘A divorced daughter is better than a dead daughter’
<https://dailytimes.com.pk/457739/a-divorced-daughter-is-better-than-a-dead-daughter/>
- ‘The Broken Bride’ A heart-wrenching experience about a young British Bangladeshi woman who endured physical and emotional violence from her husband and his family, from the start of their marriage to a couple of years in. She is now a DA activist and a beacon of hope for many women. <https://marzanarahman.com/my-story/thebrokenbride>

Honour-based violence:

A British Pakistani woman taken to Pakistan and it was believed that her first ex-husband and father had links to her murder. Full documentary on iPlayer.

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2018/02/188964/murdered-for-lovesamiashahid-bbc>

Forced marriage:

Woman found guilty of taking her 17 year old daughter to Pakistan to marry

<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/23/asia/forced-marriage-uk-pakistanintl/index.html>

British Muslim girl 17, forced to marry as family felt she was becoming “too western”

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9498647/brit-girl-forced-marry-cousintoowestern/>

Some Domestic Homicide Reviews are also published online. These are local multi-agency reviews for the death of individuals aged 16 or over were caused from violence, abuse or neglect by:

- a person to whom he or she was related, or with whom he or she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship with; or,
- a person of the same household as himself or herself <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/domestic-homicide-review>

To conclude

We can all be a part of inspiring change regarding domestic abuse and the Mosque has a huge and significant role to play in this. It is essential that Mosques can proactively act on any concerns. Awareness is the first step but responding safely is how we can move forward. Be aware of your limitations: we all have different limitations and we need to familiarise ourselves with this, as failing to work within limitations is more likely to do harm than good. The goal is to provide a safe place for individuals and to signpost them to the necessary professionals and organisations. Recovery can be a lengthy journey and it is important for the Mosques and people to be committed in providing long-term support and assistance. If you are a victim/survivor please know many individuals have been in your situation and we strongly encourage you to talk to someone. May Allah Swt The Exalted grant you ease.

Message of gratitude

This resource is the end product of the work and dedication of many people, and the mercy of Allah Swt The Exalted, for giving us the intellect, opportunity and understanding to discuss this sensitive topic. We must remember Allah Swt The Exalted's infinite love and mercy. We must remember we are not in this world forever, it is our duty towards God and humanity to serve, protect and support one another. We give thanks to 'Restored' for allowing us the opportunity to utilise and amend a publication to support Muslims and all individuals. We would like to network with other Mosques, places of worship and organisations, please do not hesitate in contacting us. We would like to thank all supporters and activists for domestic violence, you are all a valuable part of allowing us to help others.

By Anisa Masood

www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Facebook: CambsDASV

Twitter: @Cambs_DASV

Instagram: cambsdasv #cambsdasv

NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT:

- Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline in the UK (run by Refuge) 0808 2000 247
- Men's Advice Line (for men experiencing domestic violence): 0808 801 0327 www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- Galop (national LGBTQ Domestic Violence Helpline) 0800 999 5428 www.galop.org.uk
- Karma Nirvana (Forced Marriage and HBV) 0800 5999 247 www.karmanirvana.org.uk
- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300 - www.stalkinghelpline.org
- Home Office Forced Marriage Unit: 020 7008 0151 www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

LOCAL DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT

- Cambridge Women's Aid Outreach Service – 01223 361214 www.cambridgewa.org.uk – covering Cambridge City, East Cambs and South Cambs
- Refuge – 07787 255821 – covering Fenland, Huntingdon and Peterborough
- Peterborough Women's Aid – 08454 103123

Other Local Support

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary (call 999 in an emergency) [Domestic abuse \(cambs.police.uk\)](http://Domestic%20abuse%20(cambs.police.uk))
- Victim and Witness Hub 0800 781 6818 [Victim Services | Victim and Witness Hub \(cambsvictimservices.co.uk\)](http://Victim%20Services%20|%20Victim%20and%20Witness%20Hub%20(cambsvictimservices.co.uk))
- Cambridge & Peterborough Rape Crisis Partnership www.caprccp.org.uk
- The Elms Sexual Assault Referral Centre www.theelmsarc.org.uk

Muslim community organisations:

- Aanchal Women's Aid: 0845 451 2547 (24 hours) <http://aanchal.org.uk/>
- Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre (Scotland): 0808 801 0301 <https://mwrc.org.uk>
- Islamic Relief: www.islamicrelief.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigning violence-againstwomen-and-girls/
- Muslim Women's Network: 0121 236 9000 - www.mwnuk.co.uk
- Muslim Women Network Helpline: 0800 999 5786 - www.mwnhelpline.co.uk/
- Nour DV: www.nour-dv.org.uk/

Support for young people

- ChildLine: 0800 1111 - www.childline.org.uk
- NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 - www.nspcc.org.uk
- Muslim Youth Helpline: 0800 808 2008 - www.myh.org.uk
- Get Connected (16–25 years old): 0808 8084994 - www.getconnected.org.uk

Support for perpetrators (male and female)

- Respect Phoneline 0808 802 4040 www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Legal support

- Community Legal Service Direct: 0845 345 4345 - www.clsdirect.org.uk
- Rights of Women: 020 7251 6577 - www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Support for women and children from minority ethnic communities

- Refugee Council: 020 7346 6777 - www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
- Immigration Advice Service: 020 7357 6917 - www.iasuk.org
- Asylum Aid: 020 7247 8741
- Southall Black Sisters: 020 8571 9595
- Muslim Community Helpline: 020 8904 8193/020 8908 6715
<http://muslimcommunityhelpline.org.uk>
- Somali Women's Centre: 020 8752 1787
- Newham Asian Women's Project: 020 8552 5524 - www.nawp.org

General support

- Samaritans: 0845 7909 090 - www.samaritans.org.uk
- Shelter (for housing advice): 0808 800 4444 - www.shelter.org.uk
- Victim Support: 0808 1689 111 - www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111 - www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Other support

- One Parent Families: www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
- Women and Girls' Network: www.wgn.org.uk
- National Association for People Abused in Childhood: www.napac.org.uk
- Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Violence (for bereaved friends and family):
www.aafda.org.uk
- Mothers Apart from Their Children: www.matchmothers.org