

# Domestic Abuse



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

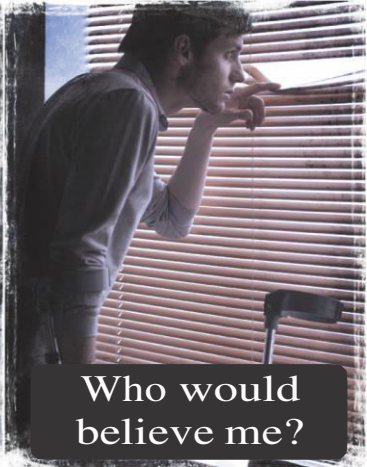
## Opening closed doors: Supporting a friend or family member



I feel  
trapped



I don't know  
where to turn



Who would  
believe me?



My family encouraged  
me to seek help



With support from a  
friend I grew stronger

**Domestic abuse can be:** physical, emotional, sexual or financial and is all about control and power over another person aged 16 or over who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality.

# Information for friends and family concerned about someone who may be experiencing domestic abuse

It's not easy to know how to support a friend or loved one who is experiencing domestic abuse.

**But you can make a difference.**

It can be very upsetting to think that someone is hurting a person you care about. Your first instinct may be to protect your friend or loved one, but intervening has potential to do harm. Of course, this does not mean you should ignore it; there are things you can do to help and this leaflet suggests ways to do this safely.

Whilst both men and women can and do experience domestic violence, it is more commonly experienced by women – especially in terms of frequency and severity. There is more research about female victims and we know what works, there's much less research into male victims but we do know they experience domestic abuse differently in some respects.

**If you witness an assault, you should call the police on 999.**

## What is domestic abuse?

The government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:*

- **Psychological**, such as intimidation, threats, blackmail, threat of suicide.
- **Physical**, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, grabbing, reckless driving.
- **Sexual**, such as rape, sexually derogatory names, unwanted sexual photos.
- **Financial**, such as withholding money, preventing employment, stealing from the victim.
- **Emotional**, such as constant criticism, name calling, isolating victim from friends and family.
- **Coercive control** is a deprivation of freedom in personal, social, economic and political life. It includes humiliation and intimidation used to harm, punish or frighten.

## Some of the signs of domestic abuse:

- Does your friend change their behaviour in front of their partner?
- Do they seem nervous when they are with their partner? As if they are walking on egg-shells?
- Have you noticed that they seem less confident or frightened – not their usual self?
- Does their partner text or call constantly when they are out with you?
- Have they started to cancel plans at the last minute, or make excuses not to spend time with you?
- Do they constantly apologise for their partner's behaviour?
- Have you noticed bruises or injuries? Were you convinced by their explanations?
- Has your friend changed their appearance? For example, do they dress more conservatively or stopped wearing makeup?
- Have they changed the way they use social networking sites like Facebook? Do they post fewer status updates or send fewer messages than they used to?
- Have they been taking more time than usual off sick from work?

## Signs that their partner might be controlling:

- Has your friend said that their partner is jealous and possessive?
- Do they cut your friend off from friends and family – trying to isolate them?
- Do they insist on picking them up and dropping them off wherever they go?
- Do they get angry or annoyed if your friend is slightly late?
- Do they criticise your friend or put them down?
- Do they make it difficult for you to spend time alone with your friend or create a bad atmosphere when you're around?
- Are they constantly posting on your friend's social media pages? Has your friend told you, or do you suspect, that they have access to your friend's accounts?
- Have you seen them lose their temper over something that seemed minor?
- Do they control the money in the relationship?

**If your friend is afraid to be themselves, or avoids doing things because they are afraid of their partner's reaction, they are being abused.**

# What might a person who is being abused be feeling and experiencing?

The list below is not exhaustive. It applies to both men and women that are being abused and to both heterosexual and same sex relationships.

- S/he may be overwhelmed by fear - a fear of further violence or threats to children's safety.
- They may believe that they are to blame and that by changing their own behaviour the abuse will stop. Research shows that this is not the case.
- Victims may experience many conflicting emotions. Your friend may love their partner, but hate the violence. They may live in hope that the good side will reappear.
- He or she may be dependent upon their partner, emotionally and financially.
- Many people experiencing abuse feel shame, guilt and embarrassment.
- S/he may feel resigned and hopeless and find it hard to make decisions about the future.
- Men may feel that it is an attack on their masculinity.
- They may not believe that they are a victim of domestic abuse because they are male.
- Research suggests that there is something of a sexuality divide in male victim's experiences with gay men experiencing more frequent and severe violence.
- It is common to think that no one will believe them.
- If children are involved, your friend may worry that if they ask for help they will never see their children again.
- In a same-sex relationship an abusive partner may threaten to expose the victim's sexual orientation with family, friends, and co-workers.

## What can you do to offer support?

- Give them time to open up. You may have to try several times before they will confide in you.
- Try to be direct. Start by saying something like, 'I'm worried about you because...' or 'I'm concerned about your safety...'
- Do not judge.
- Believe what they say – too often people do not believe a victim when they first disclose abuse.
- Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault and that you are there for your friend.
- Focus on support and building up their confidence – acknowledge strengths and remind them that they are coping well with a challenging and stressful situation.
- Abusers often isolate victims from friends and family - help your friend to develop or keep up outside contacts. This will help boost self esteem.
- Be patient. It can take time for someone to recognise they are being abused and even longer to make decisions about what to do. Recognising the problem is an important first step.
- Reassure them that they are not 'weak' - domestic abuse is about asserting power over another person.
- Encourage your friend to keep a diary of incidents and tell others if they can, and not to retaliate.
- Encourage them to report incidents to a GP or the police, to ensure details are logged. Remember that the Police may take action on any report of domestic abuse.
- Their safety, both physically and mentally is of utmost importance so don't pressure your friend into leaving the relationship.

**See back page for organisations who can help**

## Try not to do the following:

- Don't tell them what to do. Encourage your friend to make decisions at their own pace. It is important that s/he regains control over his/her own life, however slow that process may be. Remember that the partner is controlling them - the last thing they need is for friends or family to do the same.
- Don't put pressure on your friend to leave their partner. Although you may be worried, s/he has to make that decision in his/her own time. It's natural to want your friend to be safe, but don't get frustrated if they don't make any decisions straight away. Leaving an abuser is the most dangerous time for a victim. Most domestic violence murders happen when a victim has just left their partner or when they are in the process of trying to leave.
- Avoid criticising your friend's partner. This may make him or her feel embarrassed, and less comfortable about talking to you.

## Practical things you can do to help:

- Offer to keep a spare set of keys, important documents, such as passports, benefit books, and some cash, in case s/he needs to leave in a hurry.
- If your friend has suffered harm, offer to go with them to a hospital or to see their GP or a therapist/ counsellor.
- Offer to help report the assault to the police if your friend chooses to do so.
- Help to make a safety plan (see page 10).

**See back page for organisations who can help**

# Protecting children

Where there is domestic abuse between adults there is often child abuse.

All children and young people witnessing violence are being emotionally abused. Some may get caught up in the violence, or be a direct target themselves. Those who have experienced domestic violence will feel many different emotions and each will deal with it differently.

Adults often think that children and young people aren't really affected by domestic abuse if they don't see physical violence. This is not true. Children may hear a violent incident from the next room (which can be worse than witnessing it). They might see injuries later, be affected by a parent's unpredictable or controlling behavior, or be neglected as a result of the abuse.

How much a child is affected by living with domestic abuse depends on many factors. This includes their age, the nature of the abuse, what they are aware of, whether they have a 'safe significant adult' who can emotionally protect them, and their own temperament or personality.

The long-term effects on children who have experienced domestic abuse are profound, and can include depression, guilt, self-harm and suicide; misuse of alcohol or drugs; post-traumatic stress disorder and an inability to trust people.

## What can you do?

If you know a child or young person who has lived with domestic abuse, make sure that they talk to someone about what happened/happens at home. It's normal that they may withdraw, feel upset, angry and confused, but what you can do is support them in expressing these feelings more positively.

**If you are concerned about a child's safety, the most important thing is to report it – to school staff, a GP or health visitor, the police, or to children's social care by calling 0345 045 5203 (Cambridgeshire) or 01733 864180 (Peterborough) You can remain anonymous.**

**If you think a child is in immediate danger and needs urgent help, please call the police on 999**



# Protecting Adults

Adults with care and support needs may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, this makes them an 'adult at risk' (Care Act 2014)

Women with a disability are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as those without a disability.

In addition to the previous signs of abuse, adults at risk who are being abused may experience the following.

**Personal care may be withheld if the abuser is also a carer** - for example refusing to provide assistance to use the toilet as a way of controlling the victim.

**Financial abuse** – the abuser may use their status as carer to spend their partner's money inappropriately and/or without their consent.

**Emotional abuse** – the abuser may tell their partner that no one else will love them or that if they leave they will have to go into a care home.

The abuser may use children as a hold over the victim – telling them that their children will be taken away if they report the abuse because they will not be able to look after them on their own.

**Sexual abuse** – the abuser may sexually assault or rape their partner who may not physically be able to stop them or understand what is happening to them.

**Carers can also be victims of domestic abuse** – this could be a long-standing situation or as a result of behaviour changes in their partner due to illness or disability. Carers may also be a vulnerable adult or adult at risk of abuse or neglect in their own right. This is a complex area but professional support is available.

<http://www.carerstrustcambridgeshire.org/>

## What can I do?

The Council and partners take safeguarding responsibilities very seriously, if you are concerned that any adult with care and support needs is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect please contact:

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
(Search for adult abuse)

Tel: 0345 045 5202

[www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk) (search for adult abuse)

Tel: 01733 747474



# Should I get involved?

You may worry about whether you should offer support or not. Many people believe that domestic abuse is a private matter, to be dealt with behind closed doors.

But the reality is that domestic abuse is a crime experienced by 30.0% of women and 16.3% of men since the age of 16.

7.1% of women and 4.4% of men reported having experienced any type of domestic abuse in 2012/13, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female victims of domestic abuse and 700,000 male victims.

*2012/13 ONS.gov.uk*

We all have a duty to break the silence and speak out against domestic abuse. This could mean raising the subject with a friend if you are concerned, or notifying the authorities if you feel they are in serious danger.

However, remember that intervening and getting between your friend and their partner can be dangerous – for both you and them.

## It may help to remember that:

- Domestic abuse is very common. Those affected by abuse may live with it for years before they tell anyone or seek help
- Domestic abuse is very dangerous. Every month on average 7 women and 2 men are killed by a current or former partner.
- Everyone has the right to live free from violence and fear
- The victim is not to blame for the situation; only the abuser is responsible for their actions

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A national scheme called ‘Clare’s Law’ means that you or your friend can contact the police in confidence if you are concerned about a partner’s history. If their partner has a criminal record for abuse or violence, the police will disclose this to your friend. You can make an application for disclosure by speaking to a police officer in the street, calling 101, or visiting a police station.

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The police also have new powers in Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), which can ban a perpetrator from a residence with immediate effect, and not allowing them to have contact with the victim for at least 48 hours, up to 28 days.

# Preparing a safety plan

A safety plan encourages people who are suffering from domestic abuse to think about ways to stay safe while still in the relationship, as well as if they decide to leave.

This may include:

- planning in advance how to respond in different situations, including crisis situations.
- keeping important and emergency phone numbers to hand, such as for local domestic abuse services, GP, social worker, school, solicitor.
- asking neighbours who your friend can trust to call police if they hear signs of an attack.
- rehearsing an escape plan, and agreeing a code word that can be used in normal conversation.
- packing an emergency bag and hiding it somewhere safe, such as at a neighbour's house, but avoiding mutual friends.
- finding a low risk area of the house in case of attack, where they can escape and not get trapped and where there won't be potential weapons such as knives.

## Preparing to leave

Sometimes abusers will increase the violence if they think their victim is planning to leave, and will continue to be abusive after they have left.

It is advised to:

- plan to leave at a time when their abuser is not around.
- try to take everything they need with them, including important documents.
- take their children with them, or they may find it hard to have them living with them in the future.
- tell children's teachers what is happening, as well as who will pick the children up from school in the future.
- open a separate bank account, or set aside a small amount of money each week.

**The organisations on the back page can provide further support**

# FAQs

**My sister wants to leave her violent husband but she's scared to admit what's been going on in case social services take her children into care.**

It's important that children are protected, because witnessing abuse can have long-term effects on children, and many parents underestimate how aware the children are of what's going on.

If a social worker is involved they will want to know that your sister can put the needs of her children first, and protect them from harm.

**My neighbour wants to leave his violent partner but doesn't think he can afford to. His benefits are dependent on him looking for work and although he is keen to find employment, he doesn't think he can cope with this alongside the upheaval of leaving and uprooting his children.**

Victims of domestic abuse may be exempt from meeting any of the work-related requirements for a period of 13 weeks. More on [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) .

**My daughter is with an abusive partner, and has left several times but always goes back. Will he change?**

Some people can change, but only if they want to. There are programmes that he can attend which will help him to recognise patterns of abuse and learn new positive behaviours.

However, he is less likely to see the need to change if he is getting everything he needs/wants through his abusive behaviours.

**Where can my friend find a women's refuge?**

She can call the National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 for more information. For safety reasons, women normally access refuges outside of the county where they live.

**Always call 999 in an emergency**

# Support

Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire or East Cambridgeshire:

**Cambridge Women's Aid 01223 361214**

Fenland, Huntingdonshire or Peterborough:

**Refuge on 07787 255821**

**Cambridge & Peterborough Rape Crisis Partnership**

<https://www.caprcp.org.uk/>

**Cambridge Helpline 01223 245888**

**Peterborough Helpline 01733 852578**

**Sexual Assault Referral Centre 0800 193 5434** [www.theelmssarc.org](http://www.theelmssarc.org)

**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Victim and Witness Hub**

**0800 781 6818** <https://www.cambs.police.uk/information-and-services/Victims-and-Witnesses/Victim-and-Witness-Hub.aspx>

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**

**0808 2000 247** [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327** [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

**Galop** Support for LGBT people experiencing domestic violence.

**0800 999 5428** [www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

**Karma Nirvana**

Supporting victims of 'honour' crimes and forced marriages

**0800 5999 247** [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

**Rape Crisis England and Wales 0808 802 9999** [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

**NSPCC 0808 800 5000** [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

## Further information

**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership** [www.cambsdasv.org.uk](http://www.cambsdasv.org.uk)

**The Hideout** A website for children and young people  
[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

**Home Office Domestic Abuse pages**

[www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse)

**Cambs police** <https://www.cambs.police.uk/information-and-services/Domestic-abuse/Domestic-abuse>