

Domestic abuse

Tackling domestic abuse, and the harm it can cause to families, is a priority for us. We've put together the following information to help you recognise the signs and know where to get help.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is controlling, threatening or violent behaviour towards a partner or family member. Domestic abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual. Anyone forced to alter their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner's reaction is being abused. Many people who are being abused never experience physical violence so are not aware that what is happening to them is domestic abuse.

What causes domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is caused by the abusers desire to get what they want and gain control. Alcohol, drugs, unemployment or work related stress do not cause domestic abuse. These are just excuses. Alcohol and drugs may be the trigger for a particular attack, but they are not the underlying cause.

Who does domestic abuse happen to?

One in four women is abused during her lifetime. However domestic violence can happen to anyone, regardless of age, social background, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. It happens in all kinds of relationships; heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

How can I recognise the signs of domestic abuse?

People who are being abused may:

- seem afraid or anxious to please their partner
- go along with everything their partner says and does
- check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they're doing
- have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident
- show major personality changes (such as an outgoing person becomes withdrawn), or
- be depressed, anxious, or suicidal.

People who are being physically abused may:

- have frequent injuries
- frequently miss work, school, or social occasions, without explanation, or
- dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars.

People who are being isolated by their abuser may:

- be restricted from seeing family and friends
- rarely go out in public without their partner, or
- have limited access to money, credit cards, or the car.

What should I do if I suspect someone is being abused?

If a friend or family member is being abused your first instinct may be to protect them, but intervening can be dangerous for both of you. Of course, this does not mean you should ignore it – get help straight away.

Where can I get help?

If you suspect domestic abuse might be happening to someone you know, or if you are a victim yourself, you don't have to deal with it on your own. There are a range of agencies that can help.

In an emergency:

- call the police on 999.

For help and support:

- phone your local housing office
- register and login through MySovereign and tell us (www.mysovereign.org.uk)
- send us an email to community.safety@sovereign.org.uk

For independent advice:

- call 0808 2000 247 women's aid free phone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline or visit www.refuge.org.uk

