

Domestic Abuse During Covid-19

The order to stay at home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse charity Refuge has reported a 700% increase in calls to its helpline, while a separate helpline for perpetrators of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour received 25% more calls after the start of the Covid-19 lockdown.



Domestic abuse is described as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

Domestic abuse can happen to men and women, however women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse, different types of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking).

Recognising domestic abuse

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you might be in an abusive relationship. Does your partner, or former partner, ever:

Emotional abuse

- Belittle you, or put you down?
- Blame you for the abuse or arguments?
- Deny that abuse is happening, or play it down?
- Isolate you from your family and friends?
- Stop you going to college or work?
- Make unreasonable demands for your attention?
- Accuse you of flirting or having affairs?
- Tell you what to wear, who to see, where to go, and what to think?
- Control your money, or not give you enough to buy food or other essential things?

Threats and intimidation

- Threaten to hurt or kill you?
- Destroy things that belong to you?
- Stand over you, invade your personal space?
- Threaten to kill themselves or the children?
- Read your emails, texts or letters?
- Harass or follow you?

Physical abuse

- Slap, hit or punch you?
- Push or shove you?
- Bite or kick you?
- Burn you?
- Choke you or hold you down?
- Throw things?

Sexual abuse

- Touch you in a way you don't want to be touched?
- Make unwanted sexual demands?
- Hurt you during sex?
- Pressure you to have unsafe sex – for example, not using a condom?
- Pressure you to have sex?

If you think you may be suffering from abuse help is available and you are not alone. It is important that you report the abuse and access help. There are many domestic abuse helplines which you can access through clicking the gov.uk link below. These websites and helplines have buttons which can hide the caller ID and hide the visit from your browser history if you are scared of your partner finding out that you have accessed help.

If you believe you are in immediate danger then you should call 999. If you are calling from a mobile phone, then push 55 when you are prompted to be transferred to the police without having to use your voice.

The 24hr free-phone National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) is available 7 days a week on 0808 2000 247.

The helpline is answered by fully trained female support workers and volunteers, who will answer your call in confidence. All calls to the domestic violence helpline are free from mobiles and landlines. The helpline can support survivors of domestic abuse, friends and families, and professionals who are in contact with domestic violence survivors.

The helpline worker needs to ensure you are not overheard to keep you safe from harm. It's important to be aware that the perpetrator of the abuse may overhear your call and any information provided by the helpline worker. Be prepared to not get through immediately.

Resources

- www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/
- www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/
- <https://safelives.org.uk/>
- www.mankind.org.uk/
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse
- Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2018) Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2017. Published online: ONS