

Domestic Abuse and Violence

What is domestic abuse and violence?

A general definition is where one or more persons in a domestic setting, use their physical, emotional, financial or other form of powerful position, to the detriment of another, or others in that setting. Domestic abuse can be regarded as a form of bullying; and, for this paper, domestic setting can also mean at work and within social groups.

The UK government's legal definition of domestic violence 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, physical, sexual, financial and/or emotional.'

Some typical facts and statistics about domestic violence and abuse:

It is suggested that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and about two hundred women and thirty men are murdered each year in the UK. [1]

For women, almost a third of domestic violence and abuse starts during pregnancy. [2]

It is believed that 20% of all violent crime is domestic abuse. [3]

It is the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless. [4]

Usually victims suffer between 30 to 40 incidents before they turn for help. [5]

(Please note that where statistics are concerned in respect of any form of abuse, it is recognised that a large proportion of incidents go unreported. Also, individual surveys have different measuring parameters. The figures are taken from government statistics together with published sources from charities and groups that work in this field.)

Domestic abuse can take many forms:

Physical abuse: hitting, punching, kicking, choking and using weapons.

Sexual abuse: forcing or pressurising someone to have sex, and/or unwanted sexual activity such as touching, or making their victim watch pornography.

Honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) are forms of sexual abuse.

Financial abuse: taking money, controlling finances, not letting someone work.

Emotional abuse and forced control: making someone feel bad or scared, humiliation, put downs, over the top teasing, henpecking, nagging, stalking, emotionally blackmailing and manipulating, constantly checking up on and a host of other mind games. In such cases, perpetrators often accuse victims of being over sensitive and taking matters too seriously.

It can include indirect contact such as using communication and online technology, for example, social media to further isolate, humiliate or control someone. This list is far from exclusive; any acts of unfair and unkind treatment are often the early signs.

Why do people commit acts of domestic abuse and violence?

As with all abuse, the perpetrator gains, by achieving a sense of power over the victim, a power that they have failed to achieve internally in healthy and constructive ways. An example could be the boss who is henpecked at home, consequently chooses to bully their employees.

Some perpetrators' acts may be fuelled by drugs, alcohol and other forms of substance misuse.

A proportion of perpetrators suffer from 'antisocial personality disorder', and sometimes may be referred to by terms such as sociopaths or psychopaths, in that they disregard the rights or feelings of others, lack empathy or remorse and ignore the rules and accepted ways of behaving.

It may be useful to research this possibility:

<http://www.wlmht.nhs.uk/patients-and-carers/conditions/personality-disorders/diagnosis-of-personality-disorders/>

Recognising the signs of domestic abuse and violence:

Your partner:

Has your partner tried to keep you from seeing your friends or family?

Has your partner prevented, or attempted to prevent you from continuing or starting an educational course, joining a group activity, participating in counselling, or from working?

Does your partner follow you about or check up on you?

Does your partner accuse you of inappropriate flirting or of being unfaithful?

Does your partner belittle or humiliate you, or criticise you in front of other people?

Does your partner drive recklessly or do other things to scare you and make you feel in physical danger?

Are you ever afraid of your partner?

Do you have to walk on eggshells to avoid unwanted behaviours or comments from your partner?

Has your partner ever deliberately damaged or hidden your possessions?

Has your partner ever hurt or threatened you or your children?

Has your partner ever kept you unreasonably short of money?

Has your partner ever forced you to do anything that you really didn't want to do?

You:

Do you tend to self-blame?

Do you question your mental stability?

Do you find yourself altering what you say and do in attempts to make things better?

Do you live in hope that things will change for the better?

Do you make up excuses for your partners behaviour?

Do you attempt to keep up appearances where family, friends and neighbours are concerned?

Do you mistakenly interpret controlling behaviour as evidence of how much you are loved and protected?

Anybody can be affected by domestic abuse and anybody can be an abuser, irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, class, disability or lifestyle.

How domestic abuse affects children

Living in a home where there is domestic abuse is harmful. It can have a serious impact on a child's behaviour, their wellbeing and their growing sense of self-worth and confidence.

Parents or carers may underestimate the effects of the abuse on their children because they don't see what is happening. Children witnessing domestic abuse are recognised as undergoing 'significant harm' in law, and it can be a sign that children are suffering other forms of abuse or neglect.

The harmful effects can last throughout life, and be passed on to the next generations.

Help and Support

Immediate danger:

If you feel that there is an immediate risk to yourself, a family member or any other person call 999.

If you think you may be in an abusive relationship and you require general advice and support:

National Domestic Violence Helpline: (www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)
Call their free 24-hour ~ 0808 2000 247

Victim Support: (www.victimsupport.org.uk)

How Victim Support can help.

Victim Support believe that all survivors of domestic abuse should be able to get the help they need and the support that will empower them to move on from the impact of abuse. They don't just help people who have recently experienced domestic abuse – they are there to support both men and women; weeks, months and years afterwards.

Victim Support have different services in different parts of the country. All their services are confidential, free and available to anyone who has experienced domestic violence. They can help, regardless of whether you have told the police or anyone else about the abuse.

Their IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) services are staffed by specialist caseworkers and supported by specialist volunteers. These workers will help you to decide what action you want to take and the support and help that feels right for you. IDVAs often support survivors through the criminal justice system, if you choose to report the crime, and they also co-ordinate health and support services.

Victim Support have domestic abuse outreach services, which are provided by specialist caseworkers and volunteers who will work with you in the community, co-ordinating support and providing direct practical and emotional support. They work from health services, police stations, hospitals and community centres to provide information and support to a wide number of people.

Other groups and organisations:

Contact us at DABS: 07854 653118. We can provide a directory of over 150 groups and organisations in the UK and Ireland that offer specialised national and local support and information.

Special circumstances**In emergency circumstances where you recognise the need to leave home to keep yourself and others safe:**

Contact Shelter's free housing advice helpline on: 0808 800 4444 (www.shelter.org.uk)

If you are a refugee call: 0344 871 11 11: (www.redcross.org.uk)

Resolution

If you have been the victim of domestic abuse and violence, know that many survivors have fully resolved their experiences, grown as a result, and gone on to live fulfilling and successful lives in every way. Healing and recovery is not simple and straightforward but courage, commitment and a resolve not to be defeated will bring rewards.

There are indications that a history of abuse during childhood predisposes victims to be more vulnerable to domestic abuse and violence in later life. If this is the case where you are concerned, the work you do may be more intricate but the rewards of success will combine resolution of the childhood incidents with the more recent events.

See also the DABS Directory Book List

#	Statistics source
1	www.domesticviolencelondon.nhs.uk
2	www.nhs.uk
3	www.ons.gov.uk
4	www.shelter.org.uk
5	www.lwa.org.uk