DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BREAK THE CHAIN

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
BREAK THE CHAIN

If you are being physically or sexually assaulted by someone you live with or are being threatened by them, that is domestic violence. Domestic violence is controlling behaviour and includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships. It harms women and men. It wrecks thousands of lives.

Domestic violence is rarely a one-off event. Physical and sexual abuse tends to increase in frequency and severity over time, sometimes only ending when one person actually kills the other. Other forms of abusive or controlling behaviour may be ongoing. This chain of events needs to be broken.

A lot of people can help to break the chain. Some of the organisations working to do this are mentioned in this leaflet. But individuals also have an important part to play. For people experiencing violence, the support of a trusted friend can be invaluable. Breaking the chain is a job for everyone.

Domestic violence is much more common than most people realise. Even if you are not experiencing it yourself, you may well know someone who is. This leaflet may help you to help them.

We must not let domestic violence beat us. Together we can break the chain.

what can I do?

If you are in a violent relationship there are three steps you can take.

- Recognise that it is happening to you
- Accept that you are not to blame
- Seek help and support

recognising domestic violence

Domestic violence includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships. The most harmful abuse is carried out by men against female partners, but abuse can also occur by women against men and within same-sex relationships.

People experience domestic violence regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, sexuality and lifestyle. The abuse can begin at any time - in new relationships or after many years spent together.

Domestic violence can take a number of forms such as physical assault, sexual abuse, rape, and threats. In addition, it may include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment. Some abusers offer rewards on certain conditions or in an attempt to persuade their partners that the abuse won't happen again. However persuasive they seem, the violence usually gets worse over time.

accepting that you are not to blame

It is not easy to accept that a loved one can behave so aggressively. Because they can't explain their partners' behaviour, many people assume that they themselves are to blame. They are not. No-one deserves to be assaulted, abused or humiliated, least of all by a partner in a supposedly caring relationship. It is the abuser's behaviour which needs to change: there is no excuse.

seeking help

The most important thing you can do is to tell someone. For some the decision to seek help is quickly and easily made. For many, the process will be long and painful as they try to make the relationship work and stop the violence. The prospect of leaving an abusive relationship can be as frightening as the prospect of staying. Most people try to find help a number of times before getting what they need, and even after leaving there may still be a risk. Never be afraid to ask for help again.

In an emergency, always call the police by dialling 999 (minicom 0800 112 999).
If you or someone you know are experiencing domestic violence, there are a range of organisations that can help. Some useful addresses and telephone numbers are provided here, but there are many others. Libraries, local authorities and Citizens Advice Bureaux are good sources of further information.

Women's Aid National
Domestic Violence Helpline 0345 023 468
This service gives you support, help and information. They will discuss the practical and legal options available, and if you wish refer you to a local Women's Aid refuge and advice service, or other sources of help. All calls are taken in strictest confidence. The helpline is open from 10am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and from 10am to 3pm on Fridays. Outside these hours you can contact your local Women's Aid service through the local phone book, or access the Women's Aid website (www.womensaid.org.uk). In Wales you can also call Welsh Women's Aid on 01222 360854.

Local Women's Aid refuge services
There are nearly 300 local refuge projects in England and Wales. Many local Women's Aid groups also run advice centres, drop-in centres or outreach services to more isolated areas, as well as local helplines. You can call in to see someone, or telephone for advice and support, without having to stay in a refuge.

Refuge 24-Hour National Crisis Line 0990 995 443
This service provides information, support and practical help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to women experiencing domestic violence. It can refer women and their children to refuges throughout the UK.

Men's Advice Line and Enquiries 0181 644 9914
Information, support and advice to men experiencing domestic violence. Open from 9am to 5pm, Monday and Wednesday. Local projects for men are available in some areas.

Victim Support 0845 30 30 900
Victim Support offers information and support to victims of crime, whether or not they have reported the crime to the police. All help given is free and confidential. You can contact Victim Support direct, or ask the police to put you in touch with your local group. The national helpline is open from 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 7pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Shelterline 0808 800 4444
Emergency access to refuge services.

and the police take
are specially trained,
as separately
officer. The police
is safe place for you
being and, if

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
BREAK THE CHAIN

Vicar's Refreshment Stalls

Samaritans
Samaritans Emergency Helpline Co-So. 0845 064 0641
Samaritans National Helpline (NSPCC) 0800 800 500
National Child Protection Helpline 0800 056 0566
The Samaritans 0345 90 90 90
24-hour confidential emotional support for anyone in crisis. The number given above links up all their branches; or you can use the number of your local branch, which you will find in your phone book.

This free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk offers counselling, information and advice.

Relate 0181 514 1177
Relationship counselling, for non-emergency situations. There will be a local number in your phone book.
how can i protect myself from the violence?

Legal protection

Whether or not the police use the criminal law against a violent person, you can still use the civil law to get protection to allow you to live in safety. Under the Family Law Act 1996, many people experiencing domestic violence can apply for court orders against their abusers. For example, you can apply for an order against someone you live with or have lived with (whether or not you have been married); someone you have agreed to marry; or someone with whom you share parental responsibility for a child.

These orders can stop the abusive behaviour itself, or in some cases prevent the abusive person from entering the home. Courts can attach a power of arrest so that if the order is not obeyed, the abuser can be taken to court by the police.

If you are on income support or have a very low income you may be able to get legal aid to pay for a solicitor's advice and legal proceedings.

You can find out more from the police, a solicitor, your local magistrates' court or county court, Citizens Advice Bureau or Women's Aid group.

Moving away

If you are abused by the person you live with, or someone connected with you such as an ex-partner, you may decide it is best to leave your home. If you have nowhere else to go, you may wish to consider contacting the helplines given in this leaflet or the housing department of your local council. The council should provide a 24-hour emergency homelessness service. If they consider that you are vulnerable because you are at risk of domestic violence, and that it would not be reasonable for you to continue living at your home, they must help you to find somewhere else to live. If so, they may provide you with temporary accommodation such as a place in a hostel, bed-and-breakfast hotel or women's refuge.

A refuge is a safe house where women and children can live free from violence. It offers a temporary breathing space where decisions can be made free from pressure and fear. There are refuges specifically for women and children from particular ethnic or cultural backgrounds - for example black, Asian, Latin American or Jewish women - and some refuges have disabled access and staff trained in special needs.

One of the reasons that many people stay in abusive relationships is because they wonder how they will manage financially if they leave. There are various benefits which you may be able to claim and some can be paid even if you are working. Your local Social Security Benefits Office will be able to advise you.

what about the children?

There are established links between domestic violence and child abuse. Children may themselves be injured or abused or may be at risk of accidental injury, and they may also suffer indirectly even when not directly abused themselves: they are often more aware of the abuse than their parents realise.

Some abusers threaten that if their partner leaves or tells anyone about the violence, their children will be taken away from them. Social services will not take children away for this reason. If you fear your partner will abduct the children, you should seek advice. Your local Women's Aid group, Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, or a solicitor can advise on issues such as parental responsibility, where children should live, who they should have contact with, changes of school and related problems.
how can I help a friend who is experiencing domestic violence?

Unless the person you are trying to help has been very open about their experiences it may be difficult for you to acknowledge the problem directly. However, if someone does confide in you that they are experiencing domestic violence, there are some basic steps that you can take.

- **Be understanding.** Explain that there are many people in this situation. Acknowledge that it takes strength to trust someone enough to talk about the abuse. Allow them time to talk, and don’t push them to give too much detail if they don’t want to.

- **Be supportive.** Say that no-one deserves to be threatened or beaten, despite what the abuser may have said. Be a good listener, and encourage them to express their hurt and anger.

- **Let them make their own decisions,** even if this means they aren’t ready to leave the relationship. This is their decision.

- **Ask if they have suffered physical harm.** Offer to go along with them to hospital if they need to go. Help them to report the assault to the police if they choose to do so.

- **Provide information,** as far as you can, on the help which is available. Explore the options together. Go together to visit a solicitor if the person is ready to take this step.

- **Plan safe strategies for leaving the abusive relationship,** letting them decide what is safe and what is not. Don’t encourage them to follow any strategies that they are expressing doubt about.

- **Offer the use of your address and/or telephone number** for information and messages.

- **Above all, look after yourself while you are supporting someone else.** Do not put yourself in a dangerous position: for example, do not offer to talk to the abuser about your friend, or let yourself be seen by the abuser as a threat to their relationship.

Published by the Home Office in collaboration with the Crown Prosecution Service, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Department of Health, the Lord Chancellor’s Department, the Department of Social Security, the Welsh Office and the Women's Unit. Some material has been adapted with permission from publications of the Women's Aid Federation of England.

January 1999