

You're not alone: Domestic Abuse During Covid-19 and your rights.



A brief overview:

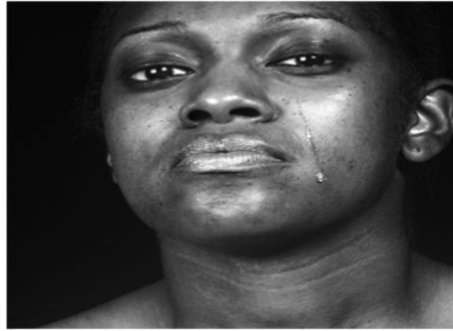
This leaflet aims to provide the victims of domestic abuse advice in relation to what their rights include and how they may be affected in response to Covid 19.

Where you can get HELP FAST!!!

1. Mankind- Initiative
Website: <https://www.mankind.org.uk>
Telephone: 01823 334244
2. Women's Aid
Website: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/>
3. NSPCC:
Website: help@nspcc.org.uk
Telephone: 0808 800 5000
Under 18 helpline (Childline): 0800 1111

**Domestic Abuse is a crime and should be reported immediately,
REMEMBER: IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT AND YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LIVE IN SILENCE.**

What is Domestic Abuse?



What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is usually thought to be by the general public, physical abuse which usually leaves a visible injury.

Domestic abuse can be categorised into many forms but are not limited to these forms. These include:

1. **Control**- A way used by the abuser to dominate the victim through controlling behaviour. This form of abuse is often subtle, in almost most cases it is insidious and pervasive for example monitoring phone calls.
2. **Physical abuse**- This includes any physically aggressive behaviours, withholding of physical needs and indirect harmful behaviour or threat of physical abuse. For example, punching, kicking, slapping or threatening physically assault.
3. **Sexual Abuse**- This form of abuse of using sex in an exploitive way or forcing sex on another person. **JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS CONSENTED TO SEX IN THE PAST, THIS DOES NOT INDICATE CURRENT CONSENT.** For example, using force to manipulation or not considering the victims desire to have sex.
4. **Emotional Abuse & Intimidation**- Emotional Abuse is any behaviour that exploits someone else's vulnerability. For example, this includes insulting or criticizing to undermine the victim's self-confidence.
5. **Isolation**- This form of abuse usually coincides with controlling behaviour; it is usually considered to be an outcome of many kinds of abusive behaviours. This includes keeping the victim from seeing who they want to see.
6. **Verbal Abuse: Coercion, Threats & Blame**- This form of abuse is any language which is used to denigrate, embarrass or threaten the victim. For example, threatening to kill or hurt the victim or the children.
7. **Using Male or Female Privilege**- Abusers will use objectification and belief that the other person exists for the satisfaction of the other persons; personal, sexual, emotional and physical needs.
8. **Economic Abuse**- The use of abuse to control the victim through manipulation of economic resources. For example, controlling the family income and giving the victim an allowance.

How are children affected by Domestic Abuse?

1. Studies have shown that 1 in 5 children are exposed to domestic abuse.
2. Children who witness child abuse experience long term harm.
3. According to the department of health UK, the number of children in need in 2017 (389,040) had risen by 4% by 2018 (404,710).
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762527/Characteristics_of_children_in_need_2017-18.pdf
4. Another study has shown that 1 in 7 children and young people under the age of 18 have lived in households with domestic violence during some point of their childhood.
5. Studies have also shown that between January 2005 and August 2015 19 children and two women were killed by abusers.
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/impact-on-children-and-young-people/>

How are adults affected by domestic abuse?

1. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone from any walk of life regardless of their age gender, class, race, age, disability or educational background.
2. Although most domestic abuse is carried out by men, men are also prone to abuse by women.
3. Domestic abuse can also occur in same sex relationships.
4. Domestic abuse can also include forced marriages, female genital mutilation, 'hormone' based abuse and abuse of elderly family members.
<https://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/staying-safe/domestic-abuse/who-is-affected-by-domestic-abuse/>

Covid-19 and Domestic Abuse

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, organisations such as (Refuge, 2020) has reported there has been a huge increase of 25 per cent in calls and online reports of domestic abuse since the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020. The organisation has also noted that there has been an observed increase in household tensions due to a number of factors including financial stresses, fears about the virus and forced coexistence.

There is a light at the end of the Tunnel: On the 5th of January 2021, the Domestic Abuse Bill will be reintroduced to the House of Lords for its second reading. What does this Bill mean? This Bill will encourage a number of major factors which include what the definition of domestic abuse is, the legal duty to support ALL survivors, changes to the experiences of survivors in court. However, it has been noted that there is a lot of work that needs to be done in regard to what is included in the Bill to ensure that ALL survivors are safe guarded. This Bill will be centred around the rise of Domestic Abuse in response to covid-19.

How Covid-19 has affected Victims of Domestic Violence as shown by Women's Aid:

1. A study conducted by the Women's Aid has shown that during the pandemic the rise in the pandemic has escalated, with women finding extreme restraints on their usual escape routes. The study also showed that 36 out of 46 women told the organisation that Covid 19 has made it harder for them to escape abuse. (Aid, 2020) .
2. Women's Aid has also highlighted that the perpetrators of domestic abuse use coercive and controlling mannerisms along with government restrictions to further control, this includes:
 - i. **Increased Control**- As of April 2020 71.7% of survivors stated that their abuser has had more control over their lifestyle since Covid-19. (Aid, 2020).
 - ii. **Economic Impact** – Over 30% of survivors have reported that their abuser has blamed them for the economic impact of Covid-19 on the household.
 - iii. **Covid-19 used a tool for abuse**- The study conducted by Women's Aid also found that 66.7% of survivors have faced strict household measurements and refusal of taking precautions to spread the virus.
3. Numerous amounts of staff members have fallen ill due to Covid-19, meaning some survivors are not being seen as promptly as they could be. This is a huge risk for these survivors.
4. The Study has also shown that 66.7% of organisations were concerned about the rise of the increase in demand due to Covid.

How has Covid-19 affected Victims of Domestic Violence as shown by Women's Aid:

1. Women's Aid has found that many refuge services are unable to comply to government guidance to stay open and provide support to new referrals.
2. Many women are finding it more difficult in finding refuge due to the lack in availability in suitable accommodation.
3. Organisations are currently making extreme efforts to reach the public through social media outsources, also through wearing 'Ask Me' badges to highlight that they are advocates for domestic abuse. This encourages members of the public to speak or ask questions about what they may be going through behind closed doors.

What are the key factors of the soon to be Domestic Violence Bill 2019-21?

The Domestic Violence Bill will:

1. Make provisions for a Domestic Abuse Commissioner (someone who governs the relations of the general public)
2. Prohibit of cross examining of certain violent and sexual offences.
3. Prohibit cross examining of crimes committed outside of the UK and for connected purposes.
4. Define the term 'Domestic Abuse'
5. Giving examples of strategic plans and annual reports to keep the general public aware of ongoing developments.

What resources are available to survivors of Domestic Abuse?

The government has now stated that those who are affected by Domestic Abuse do not need to stay in their homes if they need to escape from the abuse. The government has also acknowledged that household isolation can cause extreme anxiety for those who are experiencing it or feel as though they are at risk, the government has also emphasised that there **IS NO EXCUSE FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE, NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCE**. Please see the **Gov.co.uk** website for more info: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help#coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse>

Legal Help:

1. As mentioned previously, Domestic violence is **CRIME** and is covered under the **domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act [2004]**.
2. Survivors or those who have witnessed domestic abuse have the right to call the police.
3. Survivors also have the right to obtain a civil order which stops the abuser from contacting the survivor.
4. Survivors have the right to speak to an **'IDVA' (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate)** who can support them through the legal process and in general support.
5. Survivors have the right to ask the police for a **Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN)**. This is given to the survivor to provide emergency protection to a victim of domestic violence.

Help with Money:

1. Speak to a Domestic abuse Advisor who will advise the victim to freeze any joint account if applicable.
2. Know where all the financial documents are kept.
3. Victims of domestic abuse in most cases are entitled to Universal Credit which is a benefit that applies to all those who are in work or out of work.
4. Victims of abuse may also be entitled to Child Benefits, Jobs Seeker Allowance, Child Tax Credit and housing benefits. When applying for these benefits, it is advised to speak to an advocate who can help with the process. Please see: <https://www.refuge.org.uk/get-help-now/phone-the-helpline/>

Domestic Abuse Services:

As mentioned throughout this leaflet, there are a number of services available to domestic abuse Victims, some of the services include:

1. Refuges- associations which provide temporary accommodation.
2. Outreach Support- Community based outreach workers who provide emotional support, who can also meet the victims in the safest places possible.
3. IDVAs- This is the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates who provide expert advice to women going through civil and criminal justice systems.
4. Housing Associations- Are under legal obligation to help victims with housing.

Housing Help:

1. Victims of Domestic have the right to leave and take the children with them (if applicable).
2. It is important to seek expert support if the victim is planning on leaving the abuser.
3. Survivors have the right to seek a refuge place. This is specialised to help assist victims and their children, the refuge help to emotionally and practically support the victims.
4. Housing associations are under the legal obligations to re-house anyone experiencing domestic abuse this is governed under the **Homelessness Reduction Act [2017]**
5. Organisations such as Shelter provide free expert housing advice. Please see: https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help

Support services available

The role of Local Authorities:

Local Authorities are under legal obligation to provide services which include:

1. **MASH and MARAC**- MASH and MARAC stands for Multi-Agency Safeguarding hub and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. These services provide responses for high Risk domestic abuse victims, this is where all up to date risk information is combined with assessments of the victims needs. Please see: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/en/socialcareandhealth/hantsdomesticabuse/marac>
2. Children or Adult Social care teams
3. Housing and Homelessness
4. ASB teams
5. Schools and other educational settings
6. Drug /alcohol services

For further information please see:

<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/crime-and-public-protection/sexual-and-domestic-violence-including-vawg/domestic>

Clare's Law- Domestic Violence Disclosure:

Clare's law is an established Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme which was named after Clare Wood who was murdered in 2009 by her ex-boyfriend who was known to abuse women. This scheme allows advocates or the general public to ask about the information which is held on a person in relation to domestic violence.

The checks show if an individual has a record of violent behaviour which may put others at risk.

PLEASE SEE:

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

Domestic Abuse Services:

As mentioned previously, there are some organisation which domestic abuse victims or someone who knows or witnesses domestic abuse can contact:

1. *Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline – a 24 Hour a day confidential support helpline*
<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk>
2. *Men's Advice Line- Confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse*
<https://mensadviceline.org.uk>
3. *Galop – A national LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline and webchat service*
<https://www.galop.org.uk/galop-to-run-national-lgbt-domestic-violence-helpline/>
4. *Karma Nirvana- National help line for victims of honour-based abuse, forced marriages and domestic abuse.*
<https://karmanirvana.org.uk>
5. *Hourglass- Confidential helpline for anyone concerned about abuse of an older person.*
<https://wearehourglass.org>
6. *Muslim Women's Network Helpline- National specialist faith and culturally sensitive helpline, confidential and free to access.*
http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/Helpline_181_c.php
7. *Stay Safe East- Advocacy and support services for disabled victims and survivors of abuse.*

REMEMBER DOMESTIC ABUSE IS NOT THE VICTIMS FAULT. IT IS THE SOLE FAULT OF THE ABUSER. IT IS A CRIME. REPORT IT!