

Domestic Abuse

Advice,
guidance &
information
booklet

#ItsAbuse



Help and support

If you need help, advice or even just someone to talk to, there are support agencies that can help you:

National / Regional Support

National Domestic Violence Helpline

(run by Refuge and Women's Aid)

0808 2000 247 - 24/7 Freephone line

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Men's Advice Line

Help for male victims of domestic abuse

0808 8010 327

www.mensadvice.org.uk

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

Provided by Galop, the LGBT anti-violence and abuse charity

0300 999 5428

www.galop.org.uk

National Centre for Domestic Violence

0800 970 2070

www.ncdv.org

Forced Marriage Unit

020 7008 0151

www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage

Karma Nirvana

Forced marriage / honour based abuse charity

0800 5999 247

www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Childline

Freephone 0808 800 5000

www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Freephone 0808 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

Victim Support

0808 168 9111 (National helpline)

0151 353 4003 (Merseyside team)

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse

0808 808 8141

www.elderabuse.org.uk

Samaritans

Mental health crisis

116 123

www.samaritans.org.uk

Endeavour - Paws for Kids

Foster pets when victims of domestic abuse leave home

01204 394 842

Local Support Agencies

Worst Kept Secret

Merseyside helpline

Freephone **0800 028 3398**

www.worstkeptsecret.co.uk

Savera UK

Tackling domestic abuse within black and minority ethnic communities

Freephone **0800 107 0726** or

0151 709 6586*

*24 hour voicemail facility

www.saverauk.co.uk

Safe Place

Sexual assault referral centre for Merseyside

0151 295 3550*

*24 hours, 365 days a year

www.safeplacemerseyside.org.uk

RASA Merseyside

Support for survivors of rape and sexual abuse

0151 666 1392*

*Tuesday 6pm - 8pm, Thursday 6pm - 8pm, Sunday 1pm - 3pm

www.rasamerseyside.org

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre Cheshire and Merseyside

0330 363 0063

www.rapecentre.org.uk

Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service

0800 084 2744 / 0151 263 7474

www.liverpooldomesticabuseservice.org.uk

Centre 56

Women and children's aid centre

0151 727 1355

www.centre56.org.uk

South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services

0800 083 7114 / 0151 494 2222

www.sl-domesticabuseservices.org.uk

SWACA

Sefton women's and children's aid

0151 922 8606*

*Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9.30am - 5pm,

Wednesday 9.30pm - 7pm, Friday 9.30am - 3pm

www.swaca.com

Addaction

Drug and alcohol treatment charity

0151 706 7888

www.addaction.org.uk

Amadudu Women's Refuge

0151 734 0083

Helena Refuge

Support for male or female victims

01925 220 541 (24hrs)

Listening Ear

Support for children and young people

0151 488 6648

www.listeningearmerseyside.org.uk

IDVA Services

Each local authority area provides support for victims of domestic abuse, male or female, through Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). An IDVA is a specialist worker who can help you become safe.

Liverpool IDVA Service

0151 482 2496

0151 482 2497

0151 482 2499

idva@localsolutions.org.uk

www.localsolutions.org.uk

Wirral Family Safety Unit (IDVA Team)

0151 604 3567

Sefton IDVA Team

0151 934 5142

IDVA.team@sefton.gov.uk

The First Step, Knowsley (IDVA Team)

0151 548 3333

enquiries@thefirststep.org.uk

www.thefirststep.org.uk

St Helens IDVA Team

01744 743200

Merseyside Police

For non-urgent reports/enquires, please call **101**.

In an emergency, or if a crime is being committed, dial **999**.

For further details of support organisations, please search

www.victimcaremerseyside.org

About this booklet

Domestic abuse isn't just physical; it can be psychological, sexual, emotional or even financial and can include:

- Being forced or pressured to do things
- Feeling that you are 'walking on eggshells' all the time and frightened to say no or what you think
- Being watched and checked up on - having your freedom unreasonably restricted
- Isolation - being stopped from seeing your family and friends
- Being made to feel small
- Having no access to money or no control / influence over the household finances
- Forced marriage
- Violence including 'honour-based' abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Threats to you, your family, your pets or your possessions
- Being made to feel too tired, too depressed and too frightened to fight back or leave
- Destructive criticism, disrespect and breaking trust
- Harassment.

Anyone can be abused, no matter where they live or how much money they have.

It can affect anyone, regardless of race, age, class, gender, religion or sexuality. It happens in all kinds of relationships: heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

If you recognise any of the warnings signs, it is important to remember that you are not to blame.

For both male and female victims of abuse, the message is the same:

- Domestic abuse isn't just physical
- It is not your fault
- Help is available.

In this booklet, you will find practical information to help you make the right choice for you and your circumstances.



Staying safe

How to keep safe during a violent incident

- If you are able to, dial 999 in an emergency. Try to leave the phone off the hook so that the operator can still hear you
- If you can't dial 999, try to telephone or text a friend, relative or neighbour with a pre-arranged code word indicating that you need help so that they can call the police for you
- Plan escape routes before you need to use them
- If you have been injured and you have not been able to call the police, go to see your doctor or attend hospital as soon as possible.

Never be afraid to ask for help and always remember, in an emergency dial 999.

I have decided to stay in my relationship. What can I do to reduce the risks?

The most important thing to do is to tell someone you trust about what is happening, so that a person outside of your relationship is aware. They may be able to help you during or after an incident of abuse.

If you decide to stay in your relationship, there are measures that you can take to reduce the risks:

- You can seek support from support agencies where you live
- Let the support agencies know how they can contact you safely e.g. at work or at a friend's address
- Make sure that you remove all traces of contact with support agencies
- Use the internet in your local library or internet café to avoid leaving a trace or if you log on at home, delete your computer history if you have accessed support agencies websites
- If you have an android / smart phone be mindful of the location facility which gives information on where you have been and for how long
- Dispose of phone records
- Keep a photographic record of injuries. These may be used at a later date to support court cases or re-housing applications. Report each incident to your GP or hospital
- Try not to retaliate physically or verbally, but where you are in danger you have a right to defend yourself using reasonable force
- Keep a diary of incidents, noting down times, dates and witnesses, if any
- Talk to your children – make sure they know what to do if another violent incident happens (keep safe, ring for help).

Leaving an abusive relationship



I have decided to leave my relationship? What should I do?

You have made an important decision and there is help and support available to you.

If you haven't already, make contact with your trusted person and tell them that you have decided to leave. If suitable, they may be able to help you leave.

Leaving safely

There are things you can prepare in advance to assist you to leave your home safely:

- Tell somebody that you trust that you are leaving
- Have a small bag packed with spare clothes, keys, phone numbers, money and identification documents such as passports/ birth certificates, in case you have to leave quickly. If you're afraid that it will be found, leave it at work or with a friend
- Talk to your children beforehand about the possibility of leaving in an emergency if it's appropriate
- You may want to agree a code word or a plan with them
- Make sure that you take your children with you when you leave
- Only leave when it is safe to do so
- Consider what you may need to take with you that might help others protect you from the abuser, such as a recent photograph of the abuser.

If you later discover that you have left something behind, you can arrange to collect it with a police officer – do not return by yourself.

Emergency living arrangements

Leaving an abusive situation may leave you needing emergency accommodation if you don't have anywhere to go. You can apply for homelessness help from your local council. The council has to give you accommodation immediately while it makes enquiries into your situation.

If you are female, you can contact the National Domestic Violence helpline on freephone **0808 2000 247** to check if you can get a place in a women's refuge.

If you are male, contact the Men's Advice Line on **0808 801 0327** for further help and information.

Help with housing costs

Housing costs could be one of your biggest expenses. You may be able to get housing benefit to help pay the rent. You can claim if you are working or claiming other benefits. The amount you get depends on your circumstances, including your income, savings and the people in your household. Don't forget to tell the housing benefit office about any changes in your circumstances.

If you have left your home because of domestic abuse, you can get housing benefit for both your old home and the home you are staying in now. You can get housing benefit for both homes for up to one year, as long as you intend to return to your old home. If you do not intend to return to your old home, housing benefit is only paid on both homes for up to four weeks.

Stay safe after leaving

You may be worried that a violent or abusive person will try to find you or continue to harass or threaten you after you have left. Take steps to protect yourself from any further abuse, violence or harassment.

To reduce the risk of a perpetrator finding out your new address you can:

- Tell your children not to tell anyone where you are staying
- Tell your child's school and let them know who can collect the children from school
- Tell only trusted friends what has happened and ask them not to pass on your new address or telephone number
- Avoid using any joint bank accounts as this may reveal your location
- Make sure your address does not appear on any court papers – your solicitor, refuge worker or support worker can advise you how
- Reduce the risk of meeting your abuser, try to avoid places where they might expect to find you, change your routines and reschedule any regular appointments. Change your mobile phone number and avoid social media. Dial **141** before you make a phone call to make sure your number is kept secret
- If you have to go to a place where you think your partner might find you, try to go with someone else or let someone know where you are going. Choose a safe route where there are other people around.

Money

Your financial situation is likely to change if you leave.

It is possible to get financial help as a single parent or a single person. You may be able to apply for tax credits or benefits to help with living costs. You may also be able to get a budgeting loan to help you to pay for essentials. You can apply at your local Job Centre Plus office, either in person or by telephone.

You must report your change in circumstances if you already claim benefits. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus to report changes.

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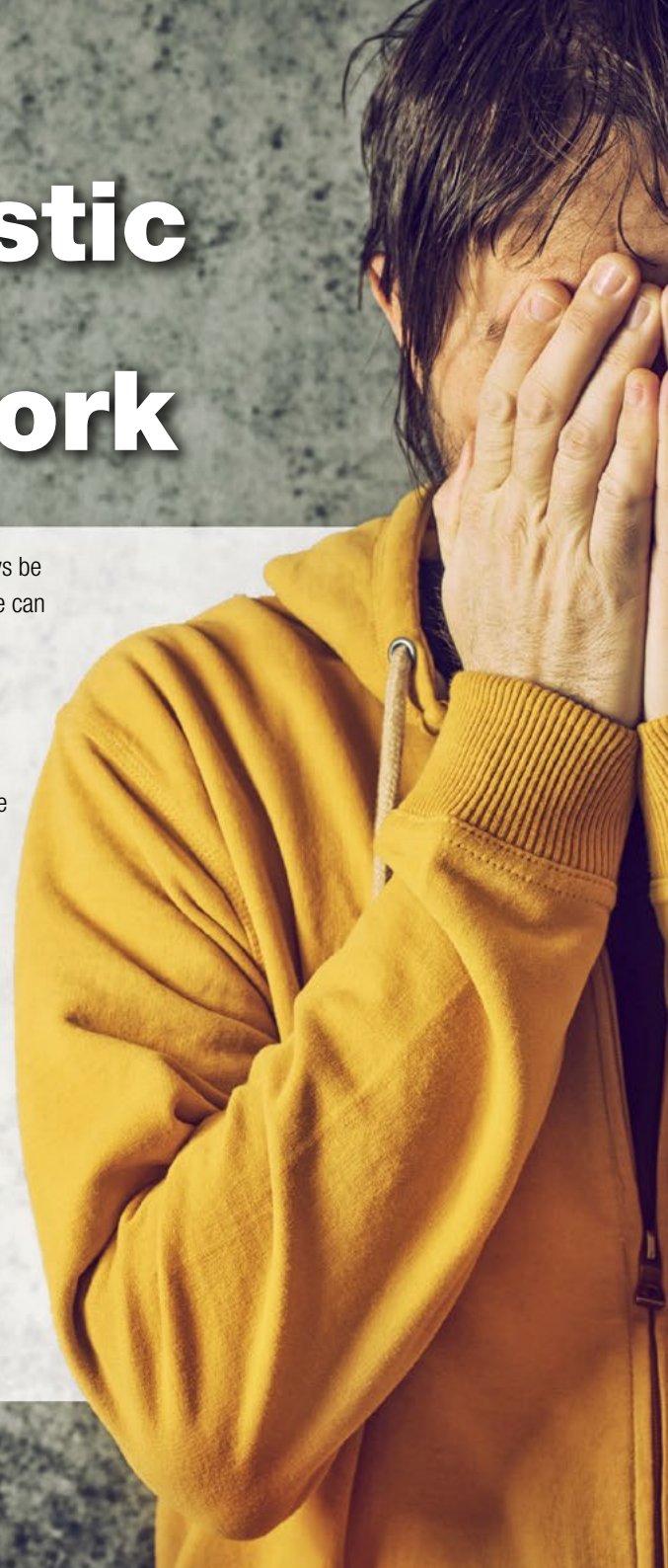
0808 800 4444 or visit **www.shelter.org.uk**

Domestic abuse and work

Home and work issues can't always be kept separate, and domestic abuse can impact on your work. It may affect your performance, attendance or timekeeping.

Employers have a duty of care to their employees as domestic abuse is a health and safety issue. Many organisations will have a domestic abuse policy, which will outline how they can support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. Talk to your line manager about what is happening and seek their support to keep you safe.

For more information, you or your employer can visit the Refuge website, **www.refuge.org.uk** to obtain a copy of the Domestic Violence Resource Manual for Employers.





Domestic abuse and children

A common worry for victims of domestic abuse is the impact upon their children.

Talking to your child / children about what is happening can help them acknowledge their feelings.

By listening to their concerns, you can reassure them that the abuse is not their fault and that they are not responsible for adult behaviour.

Encourage your children to talk about their wishes and feelings. You could do this perhaps by doing an activity together, or encouraging them to draw or write about what is happening and how they feel about it. Your child's teacher may be able to help you with this.

Your child's school may be told if the police have attended a domestic incident. This is so that the school can support your child if they are distracted or upset in class, or they have forgotten their homework or PE kit because of what they have seen or heard.

There are many organisations that can offer help and support to you and your child / children and work with you to create a safe environment for your family. For example, Liverpool Children's Centres offer a course for female survivors of Domestic Abuse. 'You and Me, Mum' is a 10 week programme for mothers to help them understand how to look after the needs of children who have lived with domestic abuse. For further information contact your local Children's Centre.

In addition, local services including Social Services or the NSPCC will be able to support you to make the best decision for your family.

Reporting domestic abuse

What happens after I or someone else on my behalf makes a report of domestic abuse to the police?

Regardless of who makes the report to the police, the welfare of the person who has suffered the abusive incident, and any children involved, is the priority.

When police arrive at the incident, if there is evidence that a crime may have been committed then officers may arrest the alleged perpetrator. An investigation as to whether a crime has taken place will be carried out.

You will be asked to provide a statement and any injuries you may have received will be photographed or recorded on the officer's body worn camera.

The police have a duty of care to you: for your protection, it is their decision, and not yours, to make an arrest or to carry out an investigation.

When the investigation is complete, the police will submit the evidence to a Police Decision Maker (PDM) and where appropriate to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The PDM / CPS will make a decision whether to charge the perpetrator based on the evidence presented to them.

Whilst there is no specific offence of domestic abuse, the PDM / CPS will identify the charge that best reflects the circumstances of the case, for example, coercive or controlling

behaviour, assault, harassment, criminal damage.

Your views will be listened to throughout this process, but it is important to know that a decision on whether to prosecute the perpetrator will be made on the evidence available with a view to protecting you and any children involved.

What happens if a charge is made?

If the PDM/ CPS decide that there is sufficient evidence to charge the perpetrator, then the case will progress to court. During the period between being charged and the court date, the perpetrator can be released on bail with conditions, for example not to contact you or communicate with you in any way.

If the perpetrator pleads guilty, you will not be required to give evidence at court.

If the perpetrator pleads not guilty, you will be required to attend court to give evidence. Merseyside Police Witness Care Unit will support you through this process, alongside local support agencies and will keep you up to date about your case and how it is progressing to ensure that your needs are met.

For more information from CPS about the court processes, please visit:

www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/

What happens if no charge is made?

If no charge is made this time, it does not mean that charges cannot be brought in relation to any further reported incidents.

Anytime you feel that your life or the lives of any children are in danger, remember to dial **999**. All incidents of domestic abuse should be reported to the police. We take reports of domestic abuse very seriously.

In cases where a PDM/ CPS have decided that there is not enough evidence to support a charge and have recommended no further action, the police may be able to issue the perpetrator with a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN), which requires the perpetrator to stay away from you and not contact you.

For more information about DVPNs and other measures available to help protect you from domestic abuse, please see the 'Protecting Against Domestic Abuse' section.

There is also help available from local support agencies. Details of agencies can be found on the inside cover of this booklet.

I want to withdraw my report of domestic abuse. What happens?

You will be required to provide a formal retraction statement to the police, detailing the reasons why you want to withdraw your report.

The Crown Prosecution Service will take this statement into account but they may well still require you to attend court.



Protecting against domestic abuse

I have experienced domestic abuse, what can the Police do to protect me?

Merseyside Police take domestic abuse very seriously and it is the officer's duty to investigate all reports of criminal activity.

There are laws available to the police which are designed to protect those who are, or have, experienced domestic abuse. These include:

Offence of Coercive or Controlling Behaviour

Officers will investigate, interview and, where there is enough evidence, seek to charge perpetrators who subject their partners/ family members to abuse that stops short of physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and/or emotional abuse.

This offence carries a maximum of five years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

To report coercive or controlling behaviour, call Merseyside Police on **101**. In an emergency, dial **999**.

Restraining order

If the perpetrator is either acquitted or convicted at court for any offence which relates to a domestic abuse incident, the police, with your consent, can apply to the court for a restraining order.

A restraining order is an order that prevents a person from continuing to pursue another person and the order can be for any length of time and in some cases could be indefinite.

Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders

A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) can only be served on a perpetrator where certain criteria are met and when a police officer not below the rank of Superintendent believes it is necessary to protect you. The notice will contain conditions or 'prohibitions' that the perpetrator must comply with, such as not living at their home address (if you live together), regardless of whose property it is, and stopping them from having any contact with you.

Within 48 hours of issuing the DVPN, Merseyside Police can apply to the Magistrates' Court for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO). If granted, the DVPO will last longer than the notice (between 14 to 28 days) and would contain similar prohibitions as contained in the DVPN.

The perpetrator can be arrested for breaching the DVPN and /or DVPO.

If the perpetrator breaches the DVPN, the hearing for the DVPO application will be brought forward, and the perpetrator will stay in police custody until that hearing.

If the perpetrator breaches the DVPO, they may be fined or sent to prison for up to 2 months.

The time away from the perpetrator is designed to give you the space to consider your options and also receive advice and support from agencies including the Police. A DVPO being in place also means that there is a greater chance that you will not have to leave your own home to flee the abuse.

A DVPN or DVPO can be issued with or without your consent.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), sometimes known as 'Clare's Law', is designed to provide you with information that may protect you from an abusive situation.

Under the scheme, you can request information about your partner if you are concerned that he or she may have a history of domestic abuse. Third parties such as friends or relatives can also make an application on your behalf.

If police checks show that your partner has a record of abuse or offers other information to indicate that you may be at risk from your partner, Merseyside Police will consider sharing this information with you. This aims to help you make a more informed decision as to whether to continue a relationship.

Even if the police have no information, or decide not to disclose any information held, this does not give a relationship a clean bill of health.



I have experienced domestic abuse. Is there anything I can do to legally protect myself (and any children) from the perpetrator?

There is legislation available which enables you to obtain an injunction.

An injunction is an order from the court to the perpetrator, which sets out conditions that the perpetrator must comply with.

You can apply for an injunction if you've been the victim of domestic abuse. The injunction either:

- protects you or your child from being harmed or threatened by the person who's abused you - this is called a 'non-molestation order'
- decides who can live in the family home or enter the surrounding area - this is called an 'occupation order'

The person named in the injunction can be arrested if they breach any of the conditions of the order.

Non Molestation Orders and Occupation Orders are issued in the Family court, and are therefore civil matters. You will therefore need to make any application yourself – the domestic abuse support services listed in this leaflet may be able to help with this. Solicitors who specialise in Family Law will also be able to advise you.

To be eligible for public funding (formerly Legal Aid) you have to have a legitimate legal problem (the merits test) and meet certain financial criteria (the means test). You can find out whether you are eligible for public funding by visiting [**www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid**](https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid)

For more information about non molestation orders and occupation orders or to apply, visit: [**www.gov.uk/injunction-domestic-violence/how-to-apply**](https://www.gov.uk/injunction-domestic-violence/how-to-apply)

The National Centre for Domestic Violence can also provide help and assistance in obtaining a Non Molestation Order. Visit [**www.ncdv.org**](https://www.ncdv.org) for more information.