

DOMESTIC ABUSE

...I'm worried about someone...

...I don't know what to do

What if I make it worse? **How can I help?**

Domestic abuse is: physical, emotional, sexual or financial and is all about control and power over another person aged 16 or over who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality.

Opening closed doors: Supporting a friend or family member



For help and information contact Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership

www.cambsdasv.org.uk



**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
Violence Partnership



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You can make a difference by supporting a friend or loved one who is experiencing domestic abuse.

It can be very upsetting to think that someone is hurting a person you care about. Your first instinct may be to protect your friend or loved one, but intervening has potential to do harm.

Of course, this does not mean you should ignore it; there are things you can do to help and this leaflet suggests ways to do this safely.

What is domestic abuse?

The Home Office define domestic abuse as follows:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

It does not matter whether abuse is a single incident or a course of conduct.

Personally Connected means:

- they are, or have been, married to each other;
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child

- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- they are relatives such as adult son, daughter, grandchild, in-laws

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This could be domestic abuse

- Does your friend change their behaviour in front of their partner?
- Do they seem nervous when they are with their partner? As if they are walking on egg-shells?
- Have you noticed that they seem less confident or frightened – not their usual self?
- Does their partner text or call constantly when they are out with you?
- Have they started to cancel plans at the last minute, or make excuses not to spend time with you?
- Have you noticed bruises or injuries? Were you convinced by their explanations?
- Has your friend changed their appearance? For example, do they dress more conservatively or stopped wearing makeup?
- Have they changed the way they use social networking sites like Facebook? Do they post fewer status updates or send fewer messages than they used to?
- Have they been taking more time than usual off sick from work?

Signs of coercive control

- Has your friend said that their partner is jealous and possessive?
- Do they cut your friend off from friends and family – trying to isolate them?
- Do they insist on picking them up and dropping them off wherever they go?
- Do they get angry or annoyed if your friend is slightly late?
- Do they criticise your friend or put them down?
- Do they make it difficult for you to spend time alone with your friend or create a bad atmosphere when you're around?
- Have you seen them lose their temper over something that seemed minor?
- Do they control the money in the relationship?



What might a person who is being abused be feeling and experiencing?

Domestic abuse can happen to people of any gender or sexual orientation. It affects people of all ages, backgrounds and religions.

Current data shows that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.

- An abused person may be overwhelmed by a fear of further abuse, violence or threats to children's safety.
 - They may believe they are to blame and that by changing their own behaviour the abuse will stop.
 - Victims may experience many conflicting emotions. Your friend may love their partner, but hate the abuse. They may live in hope that the good side will reappear.
 - They may be dependent upon their abuser, emotionally and financially or the person using abusive behaviours might depend on them
 - Many people experiencing abuse feel shame, guilt and embarrassment.
 - Male victims may feel and be told they are not a 'real man'.
 - Victims may feel resigned and hopeless and find it hard to make decisions about the future.
 - They may think, or have been told, that no one will believe them if they speak out.
 - If children are involved, your friend may worry that if they ask for help they will never see their children again.
 - In a same-sex relationship an abusive partner may threaten to expose the victim's sexual orientation to people who don't know such as family, friends, and co-workers.
- Survivors are being subjected to continued trauma and this will undoubtedly affect their mood, confidence and mental health.



What can you do to offer support?

- **Be there for them** when they need you
- **Give them time to open up.** You may have to try several times before they will confide in you.
- **Try to be direct.** Start by saying something like, 'I'm worried about you because...' or 'I'm concerned about your safety...'
- **Do not judge** or say things like 'but he seems such a nice man' or 'but she looks after you so well'
- **Believe what they say** – too often people do not believe a victim when they first disclose abuse.
- **Reassure them** that the abuse is not their fault and that you are there for your friend.
- **Focus on support and building up their confidence** – acknowledge their strengths and remind them that they are coping well with a challenging and stressful situation.
- Abusers often isolate victims from friends and family - **help your friend to develop or keep up outside contacts.** This will help boost self esteem.
- **Be patient.** It can take time for someone to recognise they are being abused and even longer to make decisions about what to do. Recognising the problem is an important first step.
- **Reassure them that they are not 'weak'** - domestic abuse is about asserting power over another person.
- **Encourage your friend to keep a diary** of incidents and tell others if they can, and not to retaliate.
- **Encourage them to report incidents to a GP or the police,** to ensure details are logged. Remember that the Police may take action on any report of domestic abuse.
- **Their safety, both physically and mentally is of utmost importance** so don't pressure your friend into leaving the relationship.

See page 12 for organisations who can provide further help and support



What can you do to offer support?

- Don't tell them what to do.
- Encourage your friend to make decisions at their own pace. It is important that s/he regains control over his/her own life, however slow that process may be.

Remember that the partner is controlling them - the last thing they need is for friends or family to do the same.

- Don't put pressure on your friend to leave their partner. Although you may be worried, s/he has to make that decision in his/her own time.

It's natural to want your friend to be safe, but don't get frustrated if they don't make any decisions straight away.

Leaving an abuser is the most dangerous time for a victim. Most domestic violence murders happen when a victim has just left their partner or when they are in the process of trying to leave.

- Avoid criticising your friend's partner. This may make him or her feel embarrassed, and less comfortable about talking to you.

Practical things you can do to help:

- Offer to keep a spare set of keys, important documents, such as passports, benefit books, and some cash, in case s/he needs to leave in a hurry.
- If your friend has suffered harm, offer to go with them to a hospital or to see their GP or a therapist/ counsellor.
- Offer to help report the assault to the police if your friend chooses to do so.
- Help to make a safety plan (see page 10)

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Protecting children

Children are victims of domestic abuse too – they may get caught up in the violence, be a direct target or see or hear the abuse or the aftermath. Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right, not just witnesses. Those who have experienced domestic abuser will feel many different emotions and each person will deal with it differently.

Adults often think that children and young people aren't really affected by domestic abuse if they don't see physical violence. This is not true.

Children may hear a violent incident from the next room (which can be worse than witnessing it). They might see injuries later, be affected by a parent's unpredictable or controlling behaviour, or be neglected as a result of the abuse.

How much a child is affected by living with domestic abuse depends on many factors. This includes their age, the nature of the abuse, what they are aware of, whether they have a 'safe significant adult' who can emotionally protect

them, and their own temperament or personality.

The long-term effects on children who have experienced domestic abuse are profound, and can include depression, guilt, self-harm and suicide; misuse of alcohol or drugs; post-traumatic stress disorder and an inability to trust people.

What can you do?

If you know a child who is a victim of domestic abuse (it is happening in their home), they are a victim and may need support. You might want to raise this with their school or other professional. It's normal that they may withdraw, feel upset, angry and confused.

If you are concerned about a child's safety, the most important thing is to report it – to school staff, a GP or health visitor, the police, or to children's social care by calling 0345 045 5203 or report online at Safeguarding children and child protection - Cambridgeshire County Council

IF YOU THINK A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER AND NEEDS URGENT HELP, PLEASE CALL THE POLICE ON 999

Protecting people with vulnerabilities

Older people and people with disabilities experience abuse too and may be more at risk of significant harm because of increased vulnerability due to ill health.

Care and support may be withheld if the abuser is also a carer -for example refusing to provide assistance to use the toilet as a way of controlling the victim.

Economic abuse

The abuser may access money inappropriately and/or without their consent, stop them from working or they might rely on the victim to fund substance or gambling addictions

Emotional abuse

The abuser may say that no one else will love them, they won't be able to cope on their own or that if they leave they will have to go into a care home.

Children

The abuser may use children as a hold over a victim who has disabilities – telling them that their children will be taken away if they report the abuse because they will not be able to look after them on their own.

Control

The abuser might tell others that

the victim has an illness such as dementia, and not to believe anything they say. Or insist they can't talk to people alone.

Sexual abuse

The abuser may sexually assault or rape the person especially if they cannot physically stop them or understand what is happening to them.

Carers can also be victims of domestic abuse

This could be a long-standing situation or as a result of behaviour changes in their partner due to illness or disability. Carers may also be a vulnerable adult or adult at risk of abuse or neglect in their own right.

This is a complex area but professional support is available www.carerstrustcambridgeshire.org

What can I do?

If you are concerned that an adult with care and support needs is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect please contact:

Cambridgeshire Adult Social Care • 0345 045 5205

Peterborough Adult Social Care • 01733 747474
www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk

If they don't have care needs but are still vulnerable encourage them to speak to a specialist domestic abuse support service



Should I get involved?

You may worry about whether you should offer support or not. Many people believe that domestic abuse is a private matter, to be dealt with behind closed doors.

We all have a duty to break the silence and speak out against domestic abuse. This could mean raising the subject with a friend if you are concerned, or notifying the authorities if you feel they are in serious danger.

However, remember that intervening and getting between your friend and their partner can be dangerous – for both you and them.

It may help to remember that:

- Domestic abuse is very common.
- Those affected by abuse may live with it for years before they tell anyone or seek help
- Domestic abuse is very dangerous.
- Every month on average 7 women and 2 men are killed by a current or former partner.
- Everyone has the right to live free from violence and fear
- The victim is not to blame for the situation; only the abuser is responsible for their actions

Clare's Law

A national scheme called 'Clare's Law' means that you or your friend can contact the police in confidence if you are concerned about a partner's history.

If their partner has a criminal record for abuse or violence, the police will disclose this to your friend. You can make an application for disclosure by speaking to a police officer in the street, calling 101, or visiting a police station.

The police also have new powers in Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), which can ban a perpetrator from a residence with immediate effect, and not allowing them to have contact with the victim for at least 48 hours, up to 28 days.



Preparing a safety plan

A safety plan encourages people who are subjected to domestic abuse to think about ways to stay safe while still in the relationship, as well as if they decide to leave.

This may include:

- planning in advance how to respond in different situations, including crisis situations.
- keeping important and emergency phone numbers to hand, such as for local domestic abuse services, GP, social worker, school, solicitor.
- asking neighbours who your friend can trust to call police if they hear signs of an attack.
- rehearsing an escape plan, and
- agreeing a code word that can be used in normal conversation.
- packing an emergency bag and hiding it somewhere safe, such as at a neighbour's house, but avoiding mutual friends.
- finding an area of the house they can be safe, where they can escape and not get trapped. During an incident avoid the kitchen or garage where there may be potential weapons.

Preparing to leave

Sometimes abusers will increase the violence if they think their victim is planning to leave, and will continue to be abusive after they have left.

It is advised to:

- plan to leave at a time when their abuser is not around.
- try to take everything they need with them, including important documents.
- or they may find it hard to have them living with them in the future.
- take their children with them,
- tell children's teachers what is happening, as well as who will pick the children up from school in the future.
- open a separate bank account, or set aside a small amount of money each week.

See page 12 for organisations who can provide further help and support



Information for Employers

Employers have a duty of care to their staff. Given the numbers of people affected by domestic abuse, it is important that workplaces familiarise themselves with the signs and take action to support employees.

Some of the signs:

- Frequent time off sick without convincing explanation.
- Preferring to come into the office if given the option to work from home.
- Seeming to be struggling financially – the abuser could be making them hand over their wages.
- Physical signs such as bruises and other injuries.
- Signs of poor mental health and distress.
- The employee's partner turning up at work unexpectedly – this could include stalking to check up on the victim.

What can employers do?

Employers should have a domestic abuse policy that sets out how they will support staff who are experiencing domestic abuse.

This could include:

- How managers will approach the subject with staff they are concerned about
- An agreed amount of paid time off to attend appointments such as solicitors, support services or courts
- How they will keep the employee safe at work – ie. not giving out personal details to callers, permission to use alternative entry/exit points.

It is also important for employers to consider how they will deal with employees who are perpetrators of domestic abuse. This could be especially important where the abuser and victim work for the same company.

Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse offer support and accreditation to employers - What we do | Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (eida.org.uk)

Impakt Domestic Abuse Support Service Support all victims of domestic abuse across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
0300 373 1073 or email DASSReferrals@impakt.org.uk

Cambs & Peterborough Victim and Witness Hub 0800 781 6818
www.cambs.police.uk/information-and-services/Victims-and-Witnesses/Victim-and-Witness-Hub.aspx

National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Cambridgeshire Police
www.cambs.police.uk/information-and-services/Domestic-abuse/Domestic-abuse

Cambridge & Peterborough Rape Crisis Partnership
www.caprccp.org.uk/

Cambridge Helpline 01223 245888

Peterborough Helpline 01733 852 578

Sexual Assault Referral Centre 0800 193 5434
www.theelmssarc.org

Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327
www.mensadvice.org.uk

Galop (LGBT abuse helpline) 0800 999 5428
www.galop.org.uk

Karma Nirvana 0800 5999 247 ('honour' crimes and forced marriage)
www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Hourglass 0808 8080 8141 (abuse of older people)
www.wearehourglass.org

Surviving Economic Abuse – website for resources
www.survivingeconomicabuse.org

Cambridge Women's Aid 01223 361214 (confirm number)

Refuge 07787 255 821

Peterborough Women's Aid 08454 103123

Further information

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Home Office Domestic Abuse pages
www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse