

BERNICA

# Domestic abuse

This guide explains how you can get advice, help and support if you are suffering from domestic abuse



Investing  
in homes,  
neighbourhoods  
and communities

# Domestic abuse

## This guide explains how you can get advice, help and support if you are suffering from domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, it is an abuse of power used by one person to control another. It's described as any incident or pattern of incidents of: controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. This can affect anyone regardless of their personal characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, transgender or religion.

### Our promise to you

We will:

- Treat all reports of domestic abuse seriously, in a sensitive manner and in confidence
- Provide you with quality advice and support by trained staff. Where we cannot help you directly, we will signpost you to specialist agencies that can help
- Where appropriate, take action against those who commit domestic abuse or support them to stop
- Keep you updated regularly if we are supporting you or taking action.



# What types of domestic abuse exist?

## Physical abuse

This can range from a slap or shove to a black eye, cut lip, or broken bone. In the most extreme cases it can result in life threatening injuries or death.

## Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is an attack on your personality rather than your body. Emotional abuse can be as harmful as physical abuse. It can lead to physical violence over time.

## Sexual abuse

You should not be forced or threatened into having sex or carrying out sexual acts if you are not comfortable with the situation.

## Financial abuse

There are many different forms of financial abuse. These could include: taking your money; stopping you from working; placing all the bills or debts in your name; or monitoring how you spend money and other financial resources. If you feel that someone close to you is limiting your financial independence, you are experiencing financial abuse.

## Controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

## Coercive behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

# Domestic abuse

**Issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and ‘honour’ abuse are also seen as Domestic Abuse.**

## **What is forced marriage?**

A forced marriage is a marriage where one or both partners do not consent to the marriage or consent is extracted under duress. A forced marriage is very different from an arranged marriage, which is carried out with the consent of both parties.

## **What is an honour crime?**

Honour crime is a crime in which mainly girls or women are punished for alleged immoral behaviour at the command of family members, where the alleged immoral behaviour is deemed to have gone against the family or community honour code and caused shame. Such alleged immoral behaviour may include:

- Being seen as dressing inappropriately or wearing make-up
- Having a boyfriend
- Rejecting a forced marriage
- Kissing in a public place
- Interfaith relationships
- Reporting domestic abuse



## Am I suffering from domestic abuse?

**Here are some questions you might want to ask yourself if you are unsure if you are suffering from domestic abuse.**

- Are you afraid of someone close to you?
- Do you feel isolated?
- Do they cut you off from family and friends?
- Are they jealous and possessive?
- Do they humiliate or insult you?
- Do they verbally abuse you?
- Do they say you are useless and couldn't cope without them?
- Have they threatened to hurt you or people close to you?
- Do they constantly criticise you?
- Do they have sudden changes of mood which dominate the household?
- Are they charming one minute and abusive the next?
- Do they control your money?
- Do you feel dominated and controlled?
- Do you change your behaviour to avoid triggering an attack?
- Are you unsure of your own judgement?
- Do they damage your possessions or smash up the furniture?
- Do they threaten to kill the pets?
- Do they threaten to kidnap or get custody of the children?
- Do they drive fast because they know it scares you?
- Do they lock you out of the house during an argument?
- Do they tell you what to wear or how to do your hair?
- Do they generally bully you?

# Domestic abuse

## What can I do and where do I start in getting help and advice?

Firstly, remember that there is no excuse for any form of domestic abuse.

**You are not to blame for the abuse and you are not alone.**

**Don't suffer in silence.** If possible, talk to someone that you trust - maybe a friend or family member. If not, speak to us. Our staff are trained and will speak to you in confidence. Talk to your housing officer or call at our office.

If you are not a tenant of Bernicia, you can still contact the local authority and apply as homeless. They have a legal duty to help you. You could also call one of the specialist local or national domestic abuse agencies that are listed in this guide. It is important that you find out about some of the options that you have.

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**While it might not be easy for you right now, you do have options available to you.**

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## How can I keep myself (and my children) safe if I am still with my abuser?

- Be ready to call 999 if you or your children are in danger
- Put some money and a set of keys in a safe place
- Find out about your legal and housing rights, e.g. talk to a solicitor
- Keep copies of important papers (passports, birth certificates, court orders, marriage certificate) in a safe place
- Have a list of emergency numbers: police, relatives, friends, Refuge
- Tell someone you trust about the abuse
- Make calls from a phone box or a friend's house
- Report any injuries to your GP so there is a record of the abuse
- Talk to family / friends about staying with them in an emergency
- Think about your escape routes.
- Do something you enjoy from time to time such as reading a book or magazine, walking in a park or listening to some music
- Make a request under Clare's Law, also known as Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, to the police which allows them to disclose to individuals details of their partners abusive pasts, allowing you to make an informed decision about your relationship and escape if necessary.

# Domestic abuse

## I am planning to leave - what should I take?

- Identification and important papers (e.g. birth certificates, passports, benefit books, bank account details, medical cards, court orders, marriage certificate)
- Money
- Phone numbers – emergency and personal
- Spare set of house and car keys
- Medicines and toiletries
- Clothes for a few days
- A few of the children's favourite toys
- Proof of the abuse (e.g. notes, photos, crime reference numbers, diary, taped messages)
- If there is a residency or parental order in place, consult a solicitor before leaving, or as soon as possible afterwards. Leave a note saying you have left with the children, that they are safe, and that the solicitor will contact the non-resident parent in the near future. Keep a copy of the note.

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**Only pack these things if it is safe for you to do so.**

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## I have already left my abuser but I still feel in danger. What can I do?

- Change the locks (including windows). Some local authorities can help with the cost of this
- Ask the police for advice on making your home more secure
- Think about escape routes
- Tell school who can / can't pick up children
- See a solicitor. They can help you with court orders to prevent further abuse and make you aware of your legal rights
- Think whether there is somewhere safe that you can stay.

## Leaving in an emergency

If you have to leave your home quickly because it is not safe for you / your children to stay, there are places available in refuges or supported accommodation. These are commonly known as 'safe houses'.

- You can stay for one night in an emergency or crisis situation
- You can stay for a few nights if you need to get away and get some space to think about the situation and the future
- You can stay while you are taking any legal action
- You can stay until you are re-housed / find longer term accommodation.

The address of such places are kept confidential and any visitors will only be allowed with your agreement. This is to ensure safety and protection for the residents staying there. Your local Council can advise you how to access safe accommodation.

# Domestic abuse

## How can I limit the affect the abuse is having on my children?

Children are often in the same or next room during domestic abuse. Even if you don't think so, your children are probably very aware of what is going on and they may even feel responsible.

By talking and listening to your children you can help them deal with what is going on. Abuse is a secret for them too and they may not even talk to those closest to them about their feelings or fears.

Children may feel insecure, frightened and confused.

They may have difficulty at school, become aggressive, have trouble sleeping or nightmares. Some become 'model' pupils because they have become anxious about 'conflict' or they may be worried about making things worse at home.

### You may want to:

- Talk openly with them and answer any questions they may have
- Make sure they know the abuse is not their fault
- Teach them abuse is not acceptable
- Help them discuss their feelings. Listen to what they have to say and respond with respect and understanding
- Avoid burdening them with adult responsibilities. As much as they may want to help, it is not their job to look after you
- Encourage them to mix with other people. Contact with other people will make children feel less isolated
- Help them to stay safe. Teach them to call 999 and speak to the police so they know how to get emergency help. But warn them that it is dangerous to intervene if you are being attacked. They are not responsible for protecting you
- Teach them to reach out for help by doing so yourself. Show them that getting help is a positive step and that there is nothing to be ashamed of
- Try to boost their self-esteem by letting them know you love them, praising them and encouraging their interests.



## Can the person abusing me change?

**It's natural to hope the person abusing you will change, or the abuse will go away. It is possible for an abuser to stop abusing but please remember it's rare.**

The first step for an abusive person is to face the truth and admit their behaviour is unacceptable. They must stop blaming you for what happens - or alcohol, drugs, stress or unemployment. These are not excuses. They must learn to respect you and they must recognise that being abusive is a choice.

Counselling of any kind will not work unless they accept the basic fact that their behaviour is about control. It is not the relationship that must change, but their behaviour.

There are perpetrator programmes for people who need help to change their behaviour.

## I am an abuser and I want to stop!

If you are reading this leaflet because you are abusing someone we understand it takes strength to admit what you are doing and confront your problems. If you really want to change then you can. You must accept responsibility and not blame drink, drugs, stress, employment or the person you are abusing. You can start by talking to your GP and counselling is available. Speak to us in confidence if you would like more information.

# Domestic abuse

## What local support is available to me?

### Northumberland

Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASSN)

Tel: 01670 820 199 (24hr)

### Sunderland

Wearside Women in Need

Tel: 0800 066 5555 (24hr)

### Newcastle

Newcastle Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS)

Tel: 0191 214 6501

### South Tyneside

Places for People Refuge

Tel: 0191 454 8257

### Gateshead

Domestic Abuse Team

Tel: 0191 433 3333 (24hr)

### Redcar and Cleveland

Foundation UK - Redcar and Cleveland Domestic Abuse Services

Tel: 0300 456 2214  
(free for mobiles)

### Darlington

Refuge

Tel: 01325 364 486

**Harbour** can provide information if you live in the following local authority areas:

### North Tyneside

### Durham

### Hartlepool

### Stockton On Tees

### Middlesbrough

Tel: 03000 202525



## What national support is available to me?

### All victims of domestic abuse:

National Domestic Violence Helpline

Tel: 0808 200 0247

### Women victims

Refuge

Tel: 0808 200 0247

### Male victims

Men's Advice Line

Tel: 0808 801 0327

[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

### Mankind Initiative

Tel: 01823 334 244

(Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm and 7pm to 9pm)

[www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)

### Children & Young People

Childline

Tel: 0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

NSPCC 0808 8005000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### Elder Abuse

Action on Elder Abuse

Tel: 0808 808 8141

[www.elderabuse.org.uk](http://www.elderabuse.org.uk)

### LGBT

Galop - LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline

Tel: 0300 999 5428 or 0800 999 5428

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

### Stalking and harassment

Victims of stalking

Tel: 0808 802 0300

### Forced marriage

The Forced Marriage Unit

Tel: 020 7008 0151

(00 44 20 7008 0151 from abroad) – 24hr

Some helplines are 24 hours and others open at certain times of the day. All details correct at time of printing and may be subject to change.

# Domestic abuse

## Who to call?

Talk to someone you can trust...

You can tell a member of staff at Bernicia in person or by contacting us in any of the ways described on the back of this leaflet.



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## In an emergency...

If you are in immediate danger, you should contact emergency services by dialling 999

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STOP



## How to contact us



**Online:** [www.bernicia.com](http://www.bernicia.com)



**Email:** [contact@bernicia.com](mailto:contact@bernicia.com)



**Phone:** 0344 800 3800



**Letter:** Bernicia Group  
Oakwood Way  
Ashwood Business Park  
Ashington  
NE63 0XF

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