

Domestic abuse

Keeping your child safe

You are not responsible for your abuser's behaviour. You or your child do not deserve to experience any form of abuse. Your abuser may blame you and other things like being drunk, pressure of work, unemployment and minimise or deny what they are doing. You may have tried changing what you do, say and wear to try to pacify and not to antagonise the situation. Violence rarely happens only once and will get more and more serious as time goes on. You need to make sure you and your child are safe. It's not easy to accept that a loved one can act in this way and you may be trying to make the relationship work.

Domestic abuse can affect children in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, bedwet, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset. Domestic abuse places children at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. It is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Keeping your child safe is your responsibility. Children can often get caught up in the crossfire and become victims.

Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.

What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can take many forms:

- Physical including sexual violence.
- Mental and verbal cruelty.
- Financial control.
- Controlling behaviour.

The facts

Domestic abuse affects many families. Women are at increased risk of domestic abuse during pregnancy and the first year after giving birth, even if there has not been any abuse before. Men can also be victims. Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they do not. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life.

If you are the victim

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and money worries can make it difficult for women with children to leave. If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you are not the only victim - your children are too. You can report domestic abuse to any professional. There are many local agencies offering support and advice. (See contacts).

Even if you think an incident is just a one-off, other professional agencies may already have concerns. So your information could be very important.

Long-term abuse is much more likely to cause problems for a child or young person as they get older. The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

1

I am being abused and it is effecting my child but if I contact someone it may get worse.

2

Don't keep what is happening secret, you have nothing to be ashamed of. The longer abuse goes on the harder it gets to take some action.

3

Don't suffer alone, get help by talking to someone you trust or contact one of the organisations listed. Be a survivor - not a victim.