

**Are you a professional
worried about responding
to a disclosure of
domestic abuse?**

**A short
toolkit to
responding to
disclosures**

solace

advice & support

Domestic abuse is...

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional.” (Home office)

Violence against women & girls can be...

- Domestic violence and abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Forced marriage
- Stalking
- Prostitution and trafficking
- Sexual exploitation
- Gang violence
- Sexual violence
- Crimes in the name of honour

Domestic abuse in society



28%

of women have experienced domestic abuse in the UK since the age of 16



85,000

women are raped in England and Wales every year



1 in 5

children have been exposed to domestic abuse

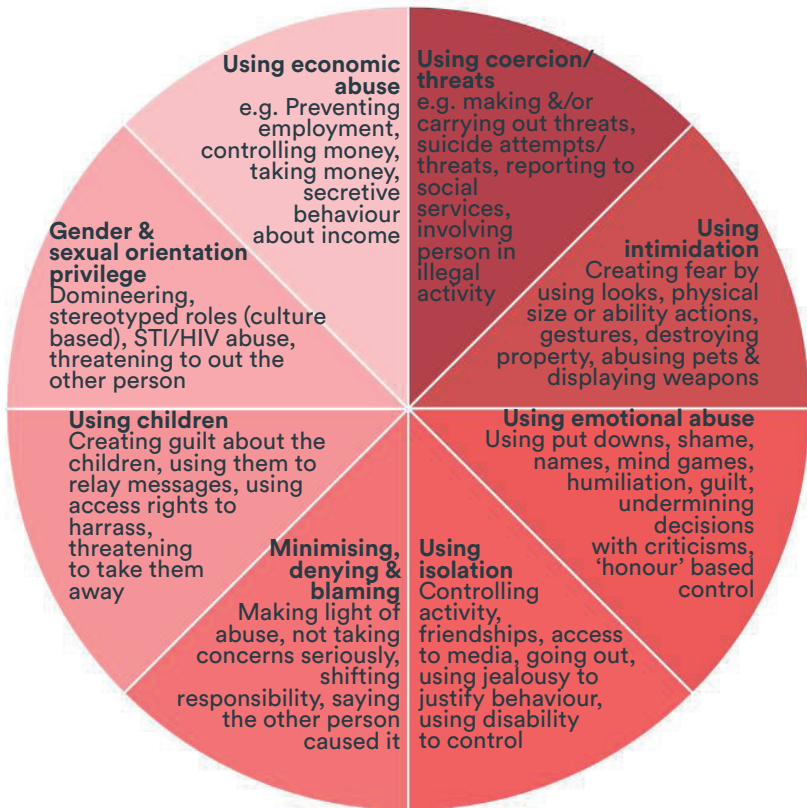
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Power and control

“Domestic abuse is about power and control, where one party has power over another, and is able to coerce and control the other party with their behaviour. Sometimes survivors may defend themselves or fight back, but this is not the same as the abuse they are facing from the perpetrator.”

- Ellen Pence; Michael Paymar (1993). Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model

The dynamics of abuse: the power and control wheel



Domestic abuse can take many forms

Here are some, but not all, types:

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Physical abuse

Preconceptions about domestic abuse

Many people believe that domestic abuse happens because of alcohol, substance use, stress or mental health difficulties. However, many people struggle with alcohol or substance use, stress or mental health difficulties and never abuse their partners. Many people who do not experience these difficulties chose to abuse their partners.

Reasons why she thinks she won't be believed They could be:

Many survivors are asked why they haven't left before if it was that bad. There are practical and emotional reasons why a woman may not feel able to leave the relationship.



There are many reasons a woman may hesitate to access support:

- I am a person of colour
- I don't speak English well
- I am Muslim
- I have an insecure immigration status
- I am trans/non-binary
- I am LGBTQ+
- I am disabled
- My child is the perpetrator
- I struggle to manage my mental health

Your role is to identify and reassure that these are not barriers to receiving support.

Your role as the professional

What you should do

- If you suspect abuse ask open and non-judgemental questions
- Keep believing and validating the survivor's story
- Talk to others if you are unsure - e.g. Safeguarding lead, manager
- Record all information thoroughly
- Refer to specialist agencies e.g. police

Identifying if it is high risk

**It can make a huge difference to the victims safety if you recognise & respond effectively
Be vigilant if any of these things are happening.**

- Victims displaying a high level of fear
- A recent separation
- Pregnancy/ new birth
- Escalation of abuse
- Community issues/ isolation
- Stalking
- Sexual assault
- Harmful practices such as forced marriage, FGM etc.
- Strangulation
- Credible threats to kill
- Use of weapons
- Controlling/ excessively jealous behaviour
- Child abuse
- Animal/ pet abuse
- Alcohol/ drugs /mental health
- Suicide / homicide

There are some useful best practice guides on the following pages.

As a professional you need to have the conversation



Set the scene

- Private, quiet space
- Talk to them on their own
- Use independent interpreters
- Explain confidentiality and its limitations
- Consider a child's welfare



Ask the question

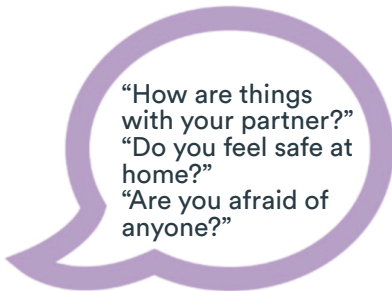
- Open, direct and non-threatening questions
- Frame it as routine enquiry
- If you're wrong they won't mind
- If you're right provide them space to talk



Find out more

- Ask questions to get more information
- Questions should be non-judgemental and non-threatening
- Take a record of what they say
- Find out what she wants to do
- Don't give advice

Questions you can ask



Appropriate response



Practical next steps

- Always call 999 if it's an emergency
- Refer to appropriate and specialist agencies
- If you have concerns about her, or her children's safety, follow your organisation's safeguarding policies
- Clarify any next steps; e.g. if you refer her to another organisation
- Take her contact details so agencies can reach her when you make a referral

Don't

- Ask her why she didn't leave earlier
- Ask what caused the violence
- Be judgemental
- Make decisions for her, or pressure her to make a certain one
- Ignore her beliefs/ fears
- Give out personal information without consent
- Make assumptions about other service providers
- Offer to mediate between client and abuser

Good practice: confidentiality

Confidentiality means keeping a service user's information between you and the service user and not telling others including co-workers, friends, family etc.

There are a few cases where the law requires disclosure:

- If the health and/or welfare of a child or young person is at risk. You are required to contact the local children's social care and notify them of your concerns
- If your service user's life is at risk or they require adult social care
- If they are at high risk you should notify MARAC

So make sure you:

- Always check your confidentiality policy and explain it to the service user at the beginning of the conversation
- Always correspond via secure emails and do not use identifiable information in a non-secure email
- Dispose of information correctly and do not hold un-necessary data
- Address immediate safety concerns - call the police if you need to



Ascent

Worried about domestic or sexual abuse?

Ascent advice and counselling for women and girls, 14+, across London

Women & Girls Network

West Advice Hub
Freephone
0808 801 0660
advice@wgn.org.uk
Mon-Fri: 10am-4pm
Wed: 6-8pm

Brent
Bromley
Croydon
Ealing
Hammersmith & Fulham
Harrow
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Kensington & Chelsea

Kingston
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Richmond
Sutton
Wandsworth
Westminster

Barking & Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Camden
City
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney

Haringey
Havering
Islington
Newham
Redbridge
Southwark
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest

Solace Women's Aid

East Advice Hub
Freephone
0808 802 5565
advice@solacewomensaid.org
Mon-Fri: 10am-4pm
Wed: 6-8pm



London
VAWG
Consortium

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Other support

Samaritans

Free, confidential support
116 123
jo@samaritans.org

Jewish Women's Aid

Freephone,
Monday-Thursday: 9:30am-9:30pm
0808 801 0500

Solace's Rape Crisis

Freephone,
Mon: 10am-2pm
Tues: 10am-1pm & 6-8pm
Wed & Thurs: 1pm-5pm
Fri: 10am-2pm
0808 801 0305

National Rape Crisis

Freephone,
Everyday: 12 noon - 2:30pm & 7-9:30pm
0808 802 9999

Southall Black Sisters

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
9:30am-4:30pm
0208 571 0800

National Domestic Violence Helpline

Freephone, 24 Hours
0808 2000 247

Men's Advice Line

Freephone
Monday- Friday: 9am - 5pm
0808 801 0327
info@mensadvice.org.uk

Survivors UK

Talk to us online
survivorsuk.org
Or, via text on 020 3322 1860
Monday - Friday: 10:30am- 9:00pm
Saturday - Sunday: 10am - 6pm

If there is risk of immediate danger call the police on 999

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Solace Women's Aid is a charity registered in England & Wales.
Charity Number 1082450. Company Number 3376716.

**Questions?
Get in touch.**

**advice@
solacewomensaid.org**

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