

# Family and friends guide to supporting someone who is experiencing Domestic Abuse

## What is domestic violence and abuse?

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviours used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay or lesbian; living together, separated or dating.

## Examples of abuse include:

- name-calling or putdowns
- keeping a partner from contacting their family or friends
- withholding money
- actual or threatened physical harm
- intimidation, sexual assault
- stalking

## How does domestic abuse impact on the family?

The abused person may feel worthless and ashamed blaming themselves for the abuse they are suffering. They may fear being judged or losing their children and home. They may be worried their abuser will find out they have spoken out. The person who is being abusive may not recognise the impact of their behaviour but they need help to stop this. Children feel frightened and just want the violence/abuse to stop. They may not understand why it's happening; often blaming themselves or feeling that they should be able to stop it.

## Here is a list of things not to do:

- **Don't criticise** the abusive person to your friend or family member. They may have mixed feelings and still love and feel protective of the person who is being abusive. Also if the abusive person knows you are criticising them they may blame your friend or family member for this and be more abusive towards them.
- **Don't confront** the abusive person yourself. This is dangerous for you and it may put your friend or family member at more risk.
- **Don't tell** your friend or family member what to do. Listen, ask them what sort of help they need or want rather than you deciding what they need or should do.
- **Don't pressurise** your friend or family member to leave or expect the family to separate. Allow them time to make their own decisions and offer support.

- **Don't judge** your friend or family member. They may feel like they are a failure for not being able to take the action that you think they should. Try to understand that there may be good reasons why they stay in the relationship.
- **Don't collude**, deny or condone abusive behaviour, even if it is your son, brother, daughter or friend who is being abusive. Encourage them to accept they have a problem and get help.
- **Don't think** you can change people or sort the problem out on your own. Get help from the agencies listed on this leaflet

### Here is a list of things to do:

- **Do talk in private** if the person experiencing abuse decides to open up, make sure you have enough time for the conversation. Tell the person it is not their fault and you are there for them if they need you.
- **Do let go of any expectations you have** - there is no "quick fix" to domestic abuse or to the obstacles faced by those experiencing it. Realize that their decision to stay in the relationship may be the safest option for them until they can figure out another plan. This does not mean that staying in the relationship is "OK", it does mean that it takes time and planning for a person to come to grips with the problem and figure out what to do or where to go.
- **Do respect** that those who experience abuse may be doing things in 'their' way because it is the best way to keep themselves and their children safe. They know their situation and the person who is being abusive best. Even if you do not agree, appreciate that if you were in their situation you may do similar things.
- **Do support their decisions** - there are risks attached to every decision that a person experiencing abuse makes. If you truly want to be helpful, be patient and respectful; allow them to make their own choices/decisions, even if you don't agree with them.
- **Do take their fears seriously** - if you are concerned about their safety, express your concern without judgment by simply saying, "The situation sounds dangerous and I'm concerned about your safety."
- **Do encourage the family to get help** - provide details of agencies that can help if they want it. Offer specific forms of help - If you are asked to do something you're willing and able to do, do it. If you can't or don't want to, say so and help identify other ways to have that need met. If you are worried about the person or children's safety, seek advice from the Police, Social Care or one of the agencies listed on this leaflet.

## **Clare's Law – The Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme**

Under Clare's Law, a person has the right to ask the police whether a current partner represents a risk of violence. Worried third parties i.e. parents, friends etc. can apply but it may be that the information obtained is disclosed to the person at risk, rather than the third party.

If the police have information that may impact on the safety of the victim, they can disclose the information to the victim and/or a person who is best placed to protect the victim. Before releasing any information, the police will meet with any safeguarding agencies to consider whether the disclosure is legal, necessary and proportionate. The disclosure should have enough information to enable the potential victim to make an informed decision about their relationship.

### **How do I make an application?**

Visit a Police Station, call 101 the Police non-emergency number, speak to a police officer on the street or visit the Cheshire Police website.

If no disclosure is made but you still have concerns and want further information about protecting someone from domestic abuse contact the services listed on this leaflet.

**Getting Help** - services providing advice will also help with recognising the warning signs of Domestic abuse and how to work with the authorities to intervene.

**Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit** - Office Hours 01606 351 375

**National 24 hour Domestic Violence Helpline** - 0808 2000 247

**National Centre for Domestic Violence** - 0800 9702070 - (help with injunctions etc.)

**Women's Housing Action Group** – 0151 356 4686 - [chesterreferrals@whag.info](mailto:chesterreferrals@whag.info)

**Cheshire Without Abuse Support Service** - 01270 250390

**Victim Support Cheshire Cares** - 01606 366336

**National Victim Support** - 0300 303 1979

**Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre** -0330 363 30063

**Housing Solutions** - 0300 123 2442

**Children's Safeguarding** - 01606 275 099

**Adult Safeguarding** - 0300 123 8123 - Out of hours call - 01244 977277

**M.A.L.E. Men's Advice Line** - 0808 801 0327

**Galop** - 0800 999 5428 - National LGBT DV Helpline

**Action on Elder Abuse** - 080 8808 8141

**Police** - 101 (24 hour) In an emergency 999

**Respect** - for those who want to change their own abusive behaviour - 0808 802 4040

**Forced Marriage Unit** - 020 7008 0151

**Forced Marriage Advice** - 0800 5999 247

**NSPCC** - 0808 800 5000

**Learn all you can about domestic violence and abuse – visit these websites for advice and support**

**[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)** -24/7

**[www.disrespectnobody.co.uk](http://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk)** – for young people

**[www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)** - National Stalking Helpline

**[www.digital-trust.org](http://www.digital-trust.org)** - managing online digital abuse

**[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)** – support for women and children

**[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)** - support for men in abusive relationships and those who are concerned about their own abusive behaviour.

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)** – for children seeking help

**[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)** – for children and young people

**[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)** - for those who want to change their own abusive behaviour.