



# DOMESTIC ABUSE

**BUGB Guide to Understanding Domestic Abuse**

**The Baptist Union of Great Britain**

## Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE? .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. CHURCH CULTURE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. WHO EXPERIENCES DOMESTIC ABUSE? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. COMMON TRIGGERS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7. THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8. CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC ABUSE .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. HOW TO RESPOND TO DOMESTIC ABUSE .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>10. SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>11. KEY CONTACTS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 1 - Types of Domestic Abuse .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix 2 - Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix 3 - Children living in a home with domestic abuse .....</b>	<b>26</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This guide has been produced to give churches an increased understanding of the issues surrounding domestic abuse and a greater confidence in how to respond appropriately. It also highlights the breadth of resources available and organisations who can give specialised support and advice.

There are many myths and falsehoods about domestic abuse, its prevalence and the Christian way to respond to it. Rather than shying away from these tough, challenging and sometimes heart-breaking issues, the church should be a safe, non-judgemental environment where all who are exposed to domestic abuse can find refuge and support.

This guide is for everyone in your church, and particularly those who have responsibility for, or involvement in, the pastoral care of others. This includes ministers, trustee, elders, deacons, lay workers and volunteers. It is also for your church's Designated Person for Safeguarding.

We hope that this guide provides your church with good information, a better understanding of domestic abuse in all its forms, and a point of reference for the contact details for a wide range of organisations who can provide help, support and care.

## WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Research from government and charitable organisations shows that:

<b>1 in 4</b>	1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime
<b>1 in 6</b>	1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime
<b>1 in 5</b>	1 in 5 children are exposed to domestic abuse

*(Statistics from the Office of National Statistics (2022), & NSPCC (2019))*

Domestic abuse is defined as:

***“Any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone’s behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are, or have been, personally connected to each other (regardless of gender or sexuality). (Domestic Abuse Act 2021)*** This can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse as well as coercive and controlling behaviour.

Domestic abuse is not just between married couples or partners. Family members include mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents: directly related, and in-laws or stepfamily.

This definition of domestic abuse includes honour-based violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. More detail on these aspects of domestic abuse can be found on page 8.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 identifies children (under the age of 18) as victims of domestic abuse in their own right where they see or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse and they are related to either the victim or perpetrator (Home Office Statutory Guidance 2021)

### Domestic abuse in numbers

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off event. Usually it consists of repeated and often escalating patterns of controlling behaviour, abuse and fear. It is often a silent crime, taking place behind closed doors.

The under-reporting of domestic abuse is common, and as most statistics are taken from crime figures based on specific events, the numbers may not reveal the whole picture of its prevalence in the UK today. The following facts and figures have been compiled from a range of sources\*.

<b>50</b>	The average number of incidents a victim experiences before getting effective help.
<b>2 a week</b>	Women who are murdered by their partner or ex-partner (1 woman killed every 3 days)
<b>1 in 3</b>	The number of pregnant women who experience domestic abuse
<b>1/3</b>	The proportion of children in high-risk domestic abuse households who are <b>not</b> known to children’s social care.
<b>2 per minute</b>	Calls received by the police reporting domestic abuse
<b>2.4 million</b>	The number of adults who were victims of domestic abuse in 2023 (1.7 million women and 699,000 men)
<b>24%</b>	Estimated proportion of domestic abuse crimes reported to the police.

*\* Including Office of National Statistics, NHS (2023) Safe Lives (2023), Refuge & NSPCC*

## CHURCH CULTURE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Churches have a unique opportunity to offer support to those affected by domestic abuse. It is not just the minister's role or for those in church leadership - it is the responsibility of the church community as a whole.

We would hope that Baptist churches demonstrate a culture and environment where all people are safe and where anyone is able to express any fears, anxieties and concerns they have without the fear of ridicule, rejection or judgement. Churches should be places of refuge and safety where victims are supported and cared for without pressure or hurrying. They should be communities that condemn violence and abuse and that challenge and support perpetrators to change their behaviour.

Sadly, churches have not always responded well to incidents of abuse when people have found the courage to ask for help. This has partly been due to a lack of understanding about domestic abuse and its impact, and partly due to the misguided use of the bible to justify and perpetuate abuse, particularly against women.

There are several ways in which your church can act as a place of refuge and safety for those who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic abuse in any form:

### Have good information available in your church building



Make sure that information and contact details for local domestic abuse support agencies are available. It is advisable that you collect these organisation details and how to contact them (make sure that you keep them up to date), before they are needed. The information should be displayed around the church building, including on the back of toilet doors, so that those who need it can access it easily and without drawing attention to themselves.

Ensure that there is space within the church building for people to talk in confidence and that conversations that warrant privacy are not held over coffee where sensitive information may be overheard.

### Be sensitive to those experiencing domestic abuse and pray for them in your services

Do not be afraid to speak out against domestic abuse in preaching, teaching, study groups and prayers within the context of regular worship. When you pray for those in need, include prayers for those experiencing domestic abuse, praying specifically for God to help them understand that it is not their fault, but the responsibility of the perpetrator.

Be aware that there will be people within your congregation for whom domestic abuse is or has been an issue and that they may be affected by hearing about it from the pulpit. Don't let this discourage you from talking about it but do make sure that relevant and effective pastoral support is in place.

Language used within worship, such as God as our Father or Jesus as a lover, can be difficult for those who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. It is also common for the Christian faith to put emphasis on the family structure and a positive family image, which may not be helpful for those from an abusive family setting. Therefore, try to be inclusive in the language that is used throughout the worship, and recognise that some services and/or topics can be painful and difficult for some. For example, we already know that many people struggle with Mothers' Day or Fathers' Day services because of their own family experiences.

### Youth and children

Young people have less experience of dating and romantic relationships, so it can be harder for them to discern what is healthy relationship behaviour and what is abusive. By allowing young people to discuss and work through how they think and feel about their relationships, you are demonstrating that your church is a place of safety and somewhere where it is possible to be honest about abuse. If you can tackle these important issues within the safety of a youth group, youth fellowship or similar, you are creating a space for young people to talk about what might be happening in their families.

Women's Aid has some resources for children of a variety of ages about domestic abuse:

[Resources for children and young people - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](https://www.womensaid.org.uk)

You could choose to host or run different training sessions for church members and the wider local community. These might include parenting courses, relationship building or confidence-building skills.

It is recommended that relevant people in the church (such as ministers, elders, deacons, pastoral leaders, Designated Person for Safeguarding) receive domestic abuse training, either as part of their ongoing safeguarding training or as a stand-alone session. This training will help the church to reflect on the damage caused by domestic abuse, and how best to support victims and perpetrators.

### Local Support

You may want to invite someone from the local police or a local support agency to talk about their work and to find out more about domestic abuse. Holding a well-publicised event and opening it up to other local churches and the local community, highlights your desire to stop domestic abuse being a taboo subject.

Refuges and domestic abuse charities are always in need of extra resources. You could hold a fundraising event or agree to regularly offer them financial support.

## Marriage Preparation

It is a sad fact that getting married is known to be one of the triggers that can lead to the start or escalation of domestic abuse. So marriage preparation is an ideal time to talk with couples about to be married about issues surrounding domestic abuse, such as equality, conflict, communication, control and violence.



Young couples and those who come from abusive childhoods can often have an idealised view of marriage. Marriage preparation is a good opportunity to raise these subjects and get couples to work through how they deal with their anger and emotions as well as reflect on past relationships, and perhaps those of their parents.

Marriage preparation classes or pre-marriage counselling also provide a very important opportunity to explain a biblical view of marriage, and to be clear that violence and abuse play no part in the marriage relationship. Those who lead marriage preparation should have received training on the issues of domestic abuse beforehand.

## TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

The government's definition of domestic abuse includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. In keeping with the definitions of abuse found in *the BUGB Model Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for Churches*, the term 'emotional abuse' is used to describe all forms of psychological, mental and emotional abuse.

In addition to the types of domestic abuse specifically highlighted by the government, there are other ways in which abuse can occur within the domestic environment, including neglect and spiritual abuse.

Further details on the common indicators of these different forms of abuse can be found in Appendix 1. The information below outlines some other ways in which domestic abuse takes place:

### Child to parent/carer domestic abuse

Child to parent/carer abuse is an aspect of domestic abuse where the child in the relationship seeks to control and coerce the parent, grandparent, foster parent or carer. It is most common for adolescent boys to be abusive towards their mothers, particularly if they are the sole parent, but this is not always the case.

There can be a number of reasons why a child is violent and/or abusive towards their parent or carer, including:

- If a child has seen a parent/carer be on the receiving end of abuse, they may believe it is normal behaviour to treat them in that manner
- There is a sense of entitlement, and the child thinks that it is their right to have all their demands met above others
- The child hasn't learnt to control or manage their feelings, particularly anger, and so they act out their feelings without using any self-control



- The parent/carer, most often the mother, is seen as weak and powerless and the child thinks it is OK to treat her/women this way
- There is no value or respect for other people, or their property
- The child is abusing alcohol or drugs

Child to parent/carer abuse is largely under-reported and parents are often unable to identify or define what they are experiencing as abuse. Instead, they may talk about *'struggling with their child'*, *'having relationship difficulties with their child'* or *'living in fear of their child'*. They may not realise that there is specific help available for them, or they may feel ashamed and embarrassed that they cannot control their child, and that they are afraid of them. Additional barriers in seeking help may arise if the parents or carer responsible for the child cannot reach a consensus on the best course of action.

### Domestic abuse and the elderly

Those who are elderly can also experience physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse at the hands of their partners and other family members. In 2021 it was estimated that 1 in 5 people over 60 experienced some form of abuse or neglect. (Hourglass 2021)

For some, they may have suffered throughout their relationship, with the abuse starting earlier in life and persisting into old age. For others they may have entered into a new relationship later in life, only to find that their new spouse or family member is abusive. Or there may be a late onset of domestic abuse that begins or is exacerbated at a significant point in life, such as retirement, ill health and frailty, disability or changes in family roles. For the very elderly, who are limited to their own homes, abuse may go on for many years without anyone to see what is happening, particularly if the abuser is the victim's key carer, either as a family member or professional carer.

It may be more difficult for older victims of domestic abuse to seek help, and when they do, the services available are not always suited to their needs.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves procedures which include the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It may also be known as female circumcision, or female genital cutting. FGM is recognised internationally as a gross violation of the human rights of girls and women, often taking place whilst girls are still in their childhood or early teenage years.

In the UK it is a crime to carry out FGM, to facilitate it or to take a British national or permanent resident abroad for it. This includes taking girls/women to countries where FGM is still legal.

### Honour Based Violence

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) describes honour-based violence as:

*‘An incident or crime which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and or community’.*

This means that the victims are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. The punishment for shame or dishonour brought to the family or community may include murder, domestic imprisonment, FGM, forced marriage, acid attacks, rape, financial abuse and the kidnapping and abduction of children.

Honour (also known as Izzat, Ghairat, Namus or Sharam), i.e. controlling people to conform to family and community rules, is used as the motivation, excuse and justification of abuse, mostly towards girls and women.

### Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is when one or both of the spouses do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage. There may be physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure exerted in order to make the marriage go ahead. Forced marriage is often accompanied by forced consummation.

In 2022 the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice and support in 297 cases of forced marriage. (Forced Marriage Unit 2022) All forms of forced marriage and honour-based violence are a fundamental breach of a person’s human rights, and forcing someone to marry without their consent is a criminal offence. In 2023 the age at which a person can legal marry was raised to 18 in England and Wales; previously someone could marry from the age of 16 with parental consent. This change has been made in order to directly protect vulnerable young people from being forced to marry. (The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022)

### WHO EXPERIENCES DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone. It is not determined by gender or sexuality, socio-economic group or ethnicity, age or disability. **ANYONE** can be affected. **ANYONE** can be a victim or a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can be against men, women, children and young people, although statistically women are more likely to be abused than men. Looking at perpetrators of domestic abuse, statistics show that the vast majority of domestic abuse is inflicted by men against women, but whoever the abuser, their motivation is largely a desire for power and control. It is often the physical force, or threat of it, that is used to remind the victim who is in control. Societal attitudes have often accepted and even supported this power and control.



**According to the British Crime Survey 2023, of the reported incidents of domestic abuse-related crime around 73.5% of the victims were female**

Perpetrators of domestic abuse, like their victims, come from all walks of life. It is not always easy to recognise perpetrators of domestic abuse, as they can be charming and friendly in public, yet nasty, abusive and violent behind closed doors. Christians, and even ministers, are capable of domestic abuse, and there are likely to be both perpetrators and victims within most churches.

It is often believed that domestic abuse is more prevalent in working class environments, yet the reality is that it is found in homes of all classes. It can be experienced by the wealthy and the poor, the employed and the unemployed, the educated and those with little education.

Another myth is that domestic abuse is more common amongst particular ethnic groups. Some forms of domestic abuse, such as FGM, forced marriage and honour-based violence, are more common among certain groups, but domestic abuse as a whole can happen to anyone.

People of all sexuality (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) can find themselves in domestically abusive relationships. Men can abuse men, women can abuse women, men can abuse women and women can abuse men.

For the victim of domestic abuse, whatever their age, gender, sexuality or culture, the effects of the abuse are likely to be significant. It will also impact friends, family, colleagues and neighbours – in fact whole communities can be affected by abuse that takes place behind closed doors.

### Male victims of domestic abuse

Men can experience all aspects of domestic abuse just as women can. However, male victims of domestic abuse are only half as likely to report their abuse as female victims (*Office for National Statistics*). Shame and embarrassment are common feelings amongst male victims, and unfortunately, there are far fewer support services for them, particularly regarding emergency accommodation like refuges and shelters.

There is also a general lack of understanding of what a male victim's rights are and where they stand legally, particularly if children are involved. It can become complicated when the man tries to ward off an attack by a female perpetrator, or simply tries to defend himself. This action can be seen by the attacker, the police or the courts as a violent attack made by the man, and some male victims report facing arrest when the police assumed that the female was the victim.

**In 2021/22 on average 1 man died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner every 3 weeks. (Mankind 2022)**  
*(Office for National Statistics)*

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) victims

Very little research has been done into domestic abuse in LGBTQI+ relationships, and there are few services which help and support those experiencing abuse within same-sex or transgender relationships.

**Many advocate organisations believe that up to 1 in 4 LGBTQI+ people experience domestic violence at some point in their lifetime.**

In addition to the forms of abuse seen within heterosexual relationships, the perpetrator within a LGBTQI+ relationship may include abusive behaviour specific to their sexuality. This may involve threats of 'outing' their partner to friends, family, the police, church or employer; telling them that no-one would believe or help them because the police and support services are all homophobic; or telling them that this behaviour is normal for a LGBTQI+ relationship.

Once someone experiencing domestic abuse in a LGBTQI+ relationship seeks help they may struggle to find the necessary support. They may have to 'out' themselves in order to report the abuse, Another barrier to accessing this help and support are the common misconceptions about abuse within LGBTQI+ relationships, such as:

- Gay male domestic abuse is logical because all or most men are prone to violence
- Lesbian domestic abuse does not occur because all or most women are not prone to violence
- Same-sex partner violence is not as severe as when a woman is abused by a man
- Because the partners are of the same gender, it is mutual abuse, with each perpetrating and receiving equally

None of these misconceptions are true. However, misconceptions, homophobia, and simply the lack of suitable and relevant services, can cause LGBTQI+ victims of domestic abuse to feel isolated and unable to do anything but suffer in silence.

## Young People

Since 2013 the government have included 16- and 17-year-olds in the definition of domestic abuse. This is significant because it allows them to access domestic abuse support services which would have previously only been available to people over 18 years of age.

Abuse and violence can occur within relationships between those under 16 and is just as significant as if the victim and perpetrator were older, and therefore presents a significant safeguarding risk which would need to be referred to the Designated Person for Safeguarding and then on to the police and Children's Social Care for further assessment and response.

You can help the young people in your church to develop respectful and healthy relationships by talking about it during youth groups and challenging behaviour and comments that could be an early indicator of unhealthy relationship behaviours. If you are concerned about the dynamics of a relationship that has developed between young people in your church please speak to the church Designated Person for Safeguarding.

## COMMON TRIGGERS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

### Triggers of domestic abuse

There are many triggers which may prompt the start of domestic abuse. These include, but are not limited to:

- Sex – particularly so in teenage cases of domestic abuse
- Cohabitation
- Marriage
- Pregnancy – over 30% of domestic abuse cases start or significantly increase during pregnancy
- Drugs and/or alcohol
- Infidelity by either partner
- Threatening to leave or separation

Domestic abuse may also take place without any external triggers or obvious causes.

## THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

People will respond to domestic abuse in different ways and assumptions should not be made about how serious or damaging various forms of abuse are. The impact of domestic abuse on a person will be specific to them and their experiences. There is no hierarchy of abuse and what one person might consider to be less serious, may have a deeply damaging impact on someone else.

As well as physical harm, the effects of domestic abuse may include:

- fear
- depression or poor mental health
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- anxiety or panic attacks
- low self-esteem
- trouble sleeping or nightmares
- a sense of isolation
- dependence on their abuser

Contrary to many peoples' perceptions, victims of domestic abuse are not weak or submissive. They must adopt all kinds of strategies to cope and survive living with an abusive partner or family member.

It is important not to underestimate the impact of domestic abuse, which will ripple out to others including the families, friends, groups, networks and the wider communities of the victim and abuser.

### Staying in an abusive relationship

It can be extremely difficult to leave an abusive partner or family member, and some victims will never leave. To those on the outside it can seem incredibly strange that someone who is being abused would want to stay in an abusive situation and continue to be on the receiving end of such brutality.

In reality, there are many practical and psychological barriers to ending a relationship with an abusive partner or family member. The risk of death is also at its highest at the point of separation or just after leaving an abusive partner.

Appendix 2 gives more information on the barriers that may prevent someone who is being abused from leaving their partner or family situation.

**Remember, it takes a great deal of courage to leave someone who controls and intimidates. It is important to focus on what is possible and safe for the victim and their children and not on our own expectations of them.**

## CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse doesn't just affect the adults who are in the abusive relationship. Children living in a home where domestic abuse occurs are also at risk. They are often called the 'hidden victims' of domestic abuse - their voices are not heard, and they have no choice whether or not to stay in the abusive environment. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 specifically identifies children as victims of domestic abuse incidents if they live in a household where incidents are taking place or are related to either the victim or perpetrator of abuse.

90% of domestic abuse incidents took place in family households where children were in the same or next room.

30% of domestic abuse cases either started or intensified during pregnancy

1 in 3 child protection cases show a history of domestic abuse, usually to the mother.

In over 50% of known domestic abuse cases the children were also directly abused.

*(Statistics from the Office of National Statistics, Home Office, Living Without Abuse, Refuge & NSPCC)*

Living with domestic abuse in a child's home can be hugely distressing for them and often has significant consequences, some of which are life-long. Appendix 3 gives more information on the impact on children or young people of experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse.

Children witnessing domestic abuse is a form of child abuse in itself. If children are in a household where domestic abuse is occurring, you have a duty to keep them safe. Speak with your church's Designated Person for Safeguarding, who should follow *the church safeguarding policy and procedures* in reporting the abuse to the statutory authorities, even if the adult victim does not want to report their abuse.

Before passing on any information about children at risk, discuss this with the adult victim where possible, and let them know your concerns and intentions. Encourage them to report the abuse and to get the necessary help for themselves and their children.

**If a child discloses domestic abuse occurring in their home, you must *immediately* report it to your church's Designated Person for Safeguarding and follow *your church safeguarding procedures*.**

## HOW TO RESPOND TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

It takes tremendous courage for someone who is being abused to come forward and tell someone, and they are most likely to tell someone they trust.

You may have noticed particular behaviours which have caused you to be concerned that someone may be in an abusive relationship. For example, you have observed that they have injuries which are unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation. They may be embarrassed or attempt to hide injuries – keeping themselves fully covered at all times, even in hot weather. They might have a quiet or frightened demeanour in their partner’s presence or become unusually quiet or withdrawn.

**If you have any concerns about someone who is exhibiting one or more of these behaviours, speak to your church’s Designated Person for Safeguarding. If you witness a violent incident or the victim is in imminent danger of harm, call the police or emergency services and then speak to the Designated Person for Safeguarding without delay.**

**Do remember that there is expert help and advice available from organisations who specifically deal with domestic abuse. If you are at all unsure, don’t be afraid to call their helplines for guidance or contact your Regional Safeguarding Lead.**

### Speaking to victims

Those who experience domestic abuse are often reluctant to define what is happening to them and name it as abuse. It can be difficult to broach the subject of abuse with someone, but you could be offering someone the first step in getting help.

<b>Gently question</b>	<p>Try not to ask direct questions such as <i>“Does your partner beat you?”</i> or <i>“Are you a victim of domestic abuse?”</i></p> <p>Instead, ask gentle questions such as <i>“How are things at home?”</i> or <i>“What’s troubling you?”</i></p>
<b>Listen and believe what they say</b>	<p>It is likely that they will minimise what they are experiencing rather than dramatising it. If they sense disbelief, they may be discouraged from disclosing again. Do not trivialise, judge, criticise or dismiss what they tell you or ask what they did to provoke the abuse.</p>
<b>Reassure them</b>	<p>It is important that you tell them that it is not their fault and that whatever they have done it does not justify the abuse that they have suffered.</p>



<p><b>Make sure they are safe</b></p>	<p>If possible, have a prepared plan of action in place within the church, to protect anyone disclosing about abuse and to prevent church workers or yourself being put at risk. If you are concerned about someone’s immediate safety, contact the police.</p>
<p><b>Give them a voice</b></p>	<p>Domestic abuse is about having control and power over someone. By making decisions for a victim, they once again have had their power and control over their own lives removed. Let them make the decisions about what to do and what help to seek, if any. Show them the support and help available and offer to continue to support them in their journey, but ultimately if they don’t want help, don’t force it upon them.</p>
<p><b>Do not investigate</b></p>	<p>It is not your job to go and speak to the perpetrator about the abuse, even if you know them. By doing so you place the victim, any children involved and possibly yourself in danger.</p>
<p><b>Keep confidentiality</b></p>	<p>What has been disclosed to you should be kept confidential between you, the person disclosing, the Designated Person for Safeguarding and the church safeguarding team, if applicable. It should not become common knowledge within the church community, not even for prayer purposes, unless the victim chooses to share that information themselves. Any records or notes of what has been said should also be kept confidential.</p> <p>However, complete confidentiality should not be promised, as it may be necessary to contact the police or statutory authorities, especially if there are children involved.</p>
<p><b>Talk to an expert</b></p>	<p>The church should be quick to work in partnership with other agencies and professionals as appropriate, to provide the best possible support for the individual or family. External support should always be sought in situations beyond your experience and expertise.</p>

### Pastoral support for victims of domestic abuse

Pastoral support can make a huge difference to those who are victims of any kind of abuse, and your safeguarding policies should include reference to who can support victims and how that support will be provided.

**Do not** suggest or offer couples counselling to those where their partner is the alleged abuser – this is not a helpful or appropriate response to domestic abuse and creates more fear and strain for the person being abused, whilst offering the abuser another opportunity to exercise control.

### Dealing with perpetrators

A perpetrator of domestic abuse should never be confronted with anything that the victim has disclosed. Not only is this a breach of confidentiality but it may also put the victim, and yourself, at risk.

It is vital that the person who is pastorally supporting the victim is not the same person who pastorally supports the perpetrator. It may even be necessary to locate pastoral support from another church for the perpetrator. There are specialist support services and organisations who work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. It is important to support the perpetrator in seeking help from these professionals rather than attempting to do it yourself.

## SUMMARY

### Recognising and responding to domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not a private family matter, and violence and excessive control are not part of normal family life. Whether the victim of the abuse is a spouse or partner, child, teenager or elderly parent, and whoever the perpetrator is, we must be prepared to help and support victims, particularly when they have the courage to speak out about what is happening to them.

Domestic abuse should be treated as seriously as any other form of abuse, and you should seek help from the Designated Person for Safeguarding at your church if you suspect that domestic abuse is taking place.

### Using your church's safeguarding policies and procedures

Our normal safeguarding processes and guidelines as laid out in Safe to Grow (safeguarding children and young people) and Safe to Belong (safeguarding adults at risk) will help you to respond appropriately. Use the '4 Rs' that underpin these policies and remember that it is not your job to investigate, but it is your responsibility to listen, observe and pass it on to the right person, i.e. your church's Designated Person for Safeguarding.

- Recognise
- Respond
- Record
- Report

### Information and support from specialist organisations

Many of the organisations listed in Appendix 1 can provide excellent information and guidance to you and your church, including specialist materials that may be useful if you would like to discuss the issue of domestic violence more widely within your church.

## KEY CONTACTS

This is a list of contacts and services who may help in the support of those who have experienced domestic abuse. It is suggested that some time is taken to find support facilities, refuges and services which are local to you, including numbers for refuges. These could be displayed in church or easily to hand when required.

### **Forced Marriage Unit**

The Government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is dedicated both to preventing British nationals being forced into marriage overseas and to assisting anyone in the UK faced with the prospect of being forced into a marriage.

**Website:** [Forced marriage - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

### **Galop**

A specialist organisation which serves the needs of LGBTQ+ victims of domestic abuse.

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

**National helpline for LGBT+ Victims & Survivors of Abuse:** 0800 999 5428

### **Hourglass**

Hourglass works across the UK supporting victims of abuse, those concerned about an older person, families, carers and practitioners.

Website: [www.wearehourglass.org](http://www.wearehourglass.org)

Telephone: 080 8808 8141

### **The Hideout**

Created by Women's Aid, the Hideout is a dedicated website for children and young people to find information and support about relationship abuse and where to get help.

Website: [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

### **IKWRO**

IKWRO's mission is to protect Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls who are at risk of 'honour' based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and domestic violence and to promote their rights

Website: [www.ikwro.org.uk](http://www.ikwro.org.uk)

Telephone: 0207 920 6460

**ManKind Initiative**

Support for Male victims of domestic abuse

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

Helpline: 01823 334244

**Men's Advice Line**

Run by Respect, Men's Advice Line is a helpline phone and website service for male victims of domestic abuse.

Website: [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

Helpline: 0808 801 0327

**NSPCC**

The NSPCC are a children's charity fighting to end child abuse in the UK and Channel Islands, by helping children who have been abused, protecting those at risk, and preventing abuse.

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

Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for adults with a concern about a child / children)

ChildLine: 0800 1111 (for children wanting to talk to someone themselves)

**Police**

Most local neighbourhood policing teams have a specialist domestic violence unit or coordinators.

Telephone: 999 – in an emergency

Telephone: 101 – in a non-emergency

It is a good idea to get the details of your local domestic violence unit and have them available and displayed. You might also want to build relationships with them and invite them to come and speak at your church.

**Refuge**

Refuge is a national charity which provides a range of specialist domestic abuse services to women and children.

Website: [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

24-hour helpline: 0808 2000 247

**Respect**

Respect is a UK membership organisation for people who work with domestic abuse perpetrators, male victims and young people.

Website: [www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

They offer a helpline phone and website service for domestic violence perpetrators.

Website: [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

Helpline: 0808 802 4040

**Restored**

Restored is an international Christian alliance, based in the UK, working to transform relationships and end violence against women.

Website: [www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)

Helpline: 020 8943 7706

**Women's Aid**

A national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. Supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK.

Website: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**National Domestic Violence Helpline:** 0808 2000 247

**Victim Support**

Victim Support is the independent charity for victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales.

Website: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Supportline: 0808 16 89 111

## Appendix 1 - Types of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including those mentioned within the government definition (psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional). In keeping with the definitions of abuse found in the BUGB Model Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, the term ‘emotional abuse’ is used to describe all forms of psychological, mental and emotional abuse.

Type of abuse	Includes....
<i>(please note that this is not an exhaustive list)</i>	
<b>Emotional</b>	<p>Emotional abuse includes behaviour which is likely to assert power and control over an individual. It may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mocking, coercing, threatening or controlling behaviour</li> <li>• Bullying, intimidation, harassment or humiliation</li> <li>• Shouting, swearing, frightening or blaming behaviour</li> <li>• Ridiculing, being obsessively and irrationally jealous</li> <li>• The lack of privacy or choice, denial of dignity, deprivation of social contact or deliberate isolation</li> <li>• Making someone feel worthless, a lack of love or affection, or ignoring the person</li> </ul>
<b>Physical</b>	<p>Physical abuse incorporates behaviours which causes both physical and emotional harm. It can be both an individual incident or an on-going pattern of repeated incidents of violence. It can be either a loss of control or a calculated act. It can include behaviours such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hitting, slapping and beating</li> <li>• Shaking, pinching and pushing</li> <li>• Kicking, burning and hair pulling</li> <li>• Squeezing, suffocating, poisoning and using inappropriate restraint</li> <li>• Imprisoning, assault with implements and destroying possessions</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual</b>	<p>Sexual abuse within domestic abuse may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rape, sexual assault or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, could not consent or was pressurised into consenting</li> <li>• Indecent assault, incest, being forced to touch another person in a sexual manner without consent</li> <li>• Indecent exposure, being forced to watch pornographic material or sexual acts</li> <li>• Imposition of dress codes upon a partner, enforced or coerced nakedness or inappropriate photography of a person in sexually explicit ways</li> <li>• Involvement in the sex trade or pornography</li> <li>• Knowingly passing on sexually transmitted infections</li> </ul>

<b>Financial</b>	<p>Financial abuse is when the abuser restricts access to or control of financial resources. It might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theft, fraud or embezzlement of monies, benefits or goods</li> <li>• Refusing to allow access to their own money</li> <li>• Applying pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance, or financial transactions</li> <li>• The abuse of influence, power or kinship to persuade a person to make gifts or change their will</li> <li>• Keeping them in poverty</li> </ul>
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Neglect is when a person’s wellbeing is impaired, and their care needs are not met; this is most likely to occur when a person is unable to manage their own care due to disability, illness or mental health concerns. It might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to provide access to appropriate health, social care or education services</li> <li>• Ignoring medical or physical care needs, including not giving someone proper food or assistance with eating or drinking</li> <li>• Failing to provide a warm, safe and comfortable environment</li> <li>• Deliberately withholding aids, such as walking sticks or hearing aids</li> <li>• Denying social, religious or cultural contacts</li> <li>• Leaving someone alone or unsupervised</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual abuse</b>	<p>Spiritual abuse is the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, or the coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. In a domestic abuse context, it might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forcing religious ideas or practices onto people, particularly those who may be vulnerable to such practices</li> <li>• The misuse of scripture to control behaviour and pressure to conform</li> <li>• The requirement of obedience to the abuser, or the suggestion that the abuser has a “divine” position</li> <li>• The denial of the right of faith or opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God</li> <li>• Intrusive healing and deliverance ministries, which may result in emotional, physical or sexual harm</li> </ul>
<b>Tech abuse</b>	<p>The abuser may use technology to perpetrate abuse and exert control. Examples of this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending abusive messages</li> <li>• Demanding access to social media and devices</li> <li>• Installing spyware and tracking programmes to monitor movement and activity</li> <li>• Sharing images online</li> </ul>



<b>Coercion and Control</b>	<p>When an abuser uses a pattern of behaviour over time to exert power and control. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Isolating from friends and family</li><li>• Monitoring movements and use of time, including using online communication tools or spyware to do so</li><li>• Taking control over aspects of everyday life i.e. access to food and sleep, what to wear</li><li>• Restricting or preventing access to support services, such as medical services</li><li>• Repeated criticism and undermining behaviour</li><li>• Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising behaviour</li><li>• Controlling finances</li><li>• Making threats or using intimidation tactics</li></ul> <p>Coercion and Control is likely to include aspects of a number of different categories of abuse which are set out above.</p>
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## Appendix 2 - Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship

There are many reasons why someone experiencing abuse may believe that it is not possible for them to move away from the situation in which abuse is happening to them. These may include practical, emotional, financial and cultural issues, some of which are shown below:

- **Lack of financial resources** - no access to money; not able to support themselves and their children independently
- **Safety** –the victim may be fearful of what the abuser will do to them and the children if they left or attempted to leave
- **Remembering good times** – particularly those at the start of the relationship
- **Hope** - that the abuser will change or that things will get better
- **Children** - the belief that staying is better for the children
- **Shame** – the embarrassment of people finding out
- **Two different people** – long periods between incidents of abuse when the abuser is charming and caring
- **Isolation** - if emotionally and financially dependent on their partner, they may be very isolated.
- **Religious or cultural beliefs** – admitting there is a problem will bring shame on their family or pressure to not destroy a marriage
- **Leaving everything behind** – having to leave friends, family, neighbours, job, school, clothes, possessions, pets etc.
- **Lack of self-confidence / self-esteem** – the victim’s self-esteem has been steadily worn down and they no longer believe that they can manage on their own, or that they have any options.
- **Pressure** – from family and friends to stay and ‘make it work’
- **Denial** – convincing themselves that “it’s not that bad”
- **Expectation** – having grown up in an abusive household, the belief that this is what relationships look like
- **Guilt** – the belief that they deserve the abuse, and it is their fault
- **Loyalty** – devotion to the abuser regardless of their actions
- **Fear of being alone** – being with someone, despite their faults, is better than the fear of being lonely
- **Lack of support** – doesn’t know who to turn to or where to go, particularly if English is not their first language
- **Rescuing** – the belief that they can change the abuser
- **Intimidation** – the abuser threatens to take the children or pets away
- **Immigration** – the fear of being deported
- **Love** – despite the abuse, they still love the abuser

## Appendix 3 - Children living in a home with domestic abuse

For children and young people living in a home where domestic is abuse taking place can be hugely distressing and confusing for them, and they are likely to experience both long and short-term consequences of the abuse. These may include:

- A risk of injury when they try to intervene or stop the abuse
- Guilt that they didn't try to intervene or stop the abuse
- Feeling responsible for everything happening in the family
- Attempts to be perfect and anxious to please
- Fear of the abuser and other people who are similar to the abuser
- Ambivalence towards the victim
- Frightened by seeing arguments or violence
- Afraid of their own emotions, such as anger
- Difficulty in creating positive relationships
- Increased temper tantrums
- Violence and aggression
- Running away from home
- Anxiety and depression
- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Bed wetting
- Behaving as though they are younger than they are
- Playing truant or having problems at school
- Low self-esteem
- Substance and alcohol abuse
- Self-harming
- Eating disorders
- Feelings of powerlessness, insecurities, guilt, fear and loneliness

**This guide has been produced for use in Baptist churches in England and Wales.**

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