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you're not right in the head it must be my fault won't do it again

# Recognising and responding to abuse

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## Introduction

This book was put together with the help of people living in the boroughs of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe. They were from all ages and backgrounds because domestic abuse can and does affect anyone.

Whatever their personal circumstances, many spoke about the self-doubt and responsibility they had felt and also a lot of confusion about exactly what was going on. **Many said they had not understood what domestic abuse meant.**

By talking with others they found the help they needed and also a realisation that the abuse wasn't their fault. These were some of the reasons why people wanted help:

- The children were being affected
- Became tired of hearing the same excuses
- Realised that the abuser was never going to change
- Debt and lies were making life impossible
- Too dangerous to stay any longer

We also found out that many people felt that you should only contact a domestic abuse service if you felt at crisis point or you wanted to leave and go into a refuge (emergency safe accommodation). This isn't the case – they can be contacted at any time you need advice.

The services you can get from specialist agencies are wide ranging, from one to one support, groups to help you understand why domestic abuse happens, workers who can help your children, access to counselling and therapeutic support. They are there to give you time and space to talk things through and help you explore options.

Services are developing all the time, but their aims are the same, to help you and your family. If you have other associated issues, such as worries about debt or substance misuse, they can refer you on.

We have included a list of local service providers at the end of this book and if you are struggling with issues of abuse in your own relationships, please call them for advice.

## Self doubt

“ I didn't think I was a victim of **domestic abuse** until I did the Freedom Programme ”

“ **I can't be** a victim of domestic abuse, I had a good job and so did my ex-husband ”

“ Honestly, the debt just **scares** me completely – I have no idea what he has done, but my credit is completely screwed and he really doesn't care ”

“ Despite how **vile** he was, he said it couldn't be all his fault; the little voice inside of me agreed with him – that's what being in a relationship meant wasn't it – working together on **problems...** and that's why I agreed to go to counselling with him. It was a disaster! ”

## Recognising domestic abuse

Domestic abuse has a definition which includes behaviour which can be one or all of the following:

- Physically abusive
- Sexually abusive
- Emotionally abusive
- Financially abusive
- It also includes Honour Based Violence and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation).

The reason domestic abuse is used by someone against a partner, ex-partner or close family member is to have control over them and to exercise power in the relationship. They can do this by making us frightened of them, making us feel trapped with no options for getting out, making us feel no one will believe us and making us feel we are responsible for what is happening.

In issues of Honour Based Violence and FGM, the abuser(s) seek to justify what they are doing for reasons of family honour, culture or traditions.

### Here are some examples of acts of domestic abuse

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- Destroying your personal property – especially things that are precious to you
- Taking loans out in your name without telling you
- Spitting at you
- Threatening rape or other forms of violence
- Telling lies about you
- Locking you out (including when keys are left in the lock on the other side of the door)
- Going through your phone or emails
- Asking the children to inform on you
- Dictating to you what you should wear, who you can talk to and if you can go out
- Throwing mobile phones or TV remotes at you or using other household items as a weapon

Living with this sort of behaviour can become “normal” in the relationship.

Abuse has a significant impact on us and how we feel. Panic attacks, anxiety related issues and depression or reliance on alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism can cause

additional problems, and may be exploited by an abuser as another way to control the relationship and make you feel that you will not be believed.

Our relationships with our children and family and friends can all be damaged too and we may feel vulnerable to issues like money problems and worries about housing.

## Safety tips (always call the Police if you are in danger 999)

### When you share a home with your abuser

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- If possible, remove or hide items that could be used as a weapon.
- Plan how you would be able to leave the house quickly.
- Your neighbours (if you know them and trust them) can help by being alert to any disturbances they hear in the house and calling for help.
- Keep a bag with your personal documents and some clothing at a friend's home (or at work) so you have quick access if you need to leave in an emergency.
- If you want to search online for help and support, it is recommended that you do this from a safe computer – either a trusted friend, workplace or one of the bank of computers at your local library.
- Cheap and basic pay as you go phones are the best phones to use for safety purposes.
- You don't need credit to make 999 calls.

### Ex-partners

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If you feel that you are exposed to risk or your home doesn't feel safe:

- Think about whether you need to move – get some advice and explore options.
- If you don't want to move but your home security is ineffective, the police and Sanctuary Schemes (available from district council) may be able to help with this.
- Ask neighbours to call for help if they hear any disturbances or see strangers at the house.
- Child Contact handovers can be difficult and may make you feel vulnerable, talking this issue through with a specialist provider or a solicitor may help find a safer solution.
- The police can advise you on harassment issues and the action they can take. You can get help to protect yourself through a solicitor too. If your abuser's behaviour is also causing an issue with your neighbours or disturbing them, they can speak to the anti-social behaviour team at the district council.

## Stalking

If you have separated from a partner, you may find that you become the focus of their persistent, unwanted attention. This attention can become very distressing and you may feel as if they know every detail of your life; you may feel like you have to constantly be looking over your shoulder.

Never contact your stalker in an attempt to reason with them – the stalker gets what they are seeking – contact with you. Don't keep what is happening a secret or be fearful of seeking help (let the police know, talk to the Stalking Helpline, a domestic abuse worker or solicitor).

Be alert to the risks of stalking via the internet or your mobile phone – account takeovers, social networking sites and spyware apps on your mobile all pose risks. Check out the safety advice at [www.digital-trust.org](http://www.digital-trust.org) for constantly updated information and easy to follow steps to secure your digital activity.

You can take steps to increase your personal protection, such as:

- Arranging to “check in” with a trusted friend or family member when you are out, so they know you have arrived safely – do this for homeward journeys too.
- Vary the routes you take and the times of day you use them (if possible) for things like going to work, walking the dog, attending the Job Centre, etc.
- Upgrading your home security – you may be able to access free local schemes run by the police or your district council to do this. (This includes items like personal “attack” alarms).
- Keep a diary and also hard evidence (copies of emails, texts and voicemails); if you have witnesses who hear or see things too, ask them to write down what they saw etc. Record how the stalking is making you feel.

If you feel you wish to do this, you can tell school, work, neighbours etc., to be alert to anyone who may be acting suspiciously or following you.

### Golden rules for dealing with a stalker

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1. Have no contact with them
2. Tell others
3. Increase personal protection
4. Collect evidence

## Private family law

Advice from a family law solicitor can increase your confidence. If you know exactly where you stand and what legal rights you have, you will be better informed on making important decisions.

Some family law firms offer free advice sessions so you can find out the basics and the right routes to protect yourself and your household.

Legal aid to pay for the cost of help or court proceedings is available if you are on a low income, in receipt of benefits and are seeking orders to protect yourself such as a non molestation order or occupation order.

If you are eligible for legal aid and your request is for help with children, divorce or financial settlement, you will also have to provide specific “evidence of domestic abuse” – and you can find out more by contacting a family law solicitor, the helpline or speaking with a domestic abuse worker.

If you are not financially eligible for legal aid and you want a solicitor to represent you, you will have to pay – solicitors should be able to give you an estimate for costs and some are now giving a fixed price fee. You may also be able to pay your legal bill in instalments. If you have a budget and want to manage legal costs carefully, they should be proactive in helping you do this and suggesting things you can do yourself as preparation or to keep costs down.

Finally, you can self-represent. You are entitled to a fair hearing and if you don't understand court process or legal language, you can ask for further explanation and examples of how to fill in certain forms. You can also ask to take a McKenzie Friend in with you – these are people who have experience/knowledge of court proceedings, know how to write letters for court etc. They can support you, however, they are not cheap solicitors, should not give you legal advice and cannot speak for you in court or be expected to take decisions for you.

Most domestic abuse workers will be able to give you a selection of names of recommended family law solicitors. You may also have a friend or family member who has had a good experience of a particular law firm.

The most important thing is that the solicitor you choose has a background of advising and representing those who have experienced abuse so you can feel confident that your concerns are listened to and that you feel well supported through the process.

# TOP FIRE SAFETY TIPS

## Top tip



Test it

### Test your smoke alarm every week

- Test it by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery.
- If your smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis, you need to replace the battery immediately.
- If it is a ten year alarm, you will need to replace the whole alarm every ten years.
- Ask a carer or relative to test it for you if you are unable to do it yourself.

### In the home

Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob. Keep matches and saucepan handles out of their reach to keep them safe.

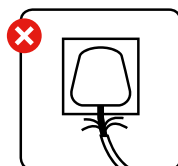
Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them triggering a fire.

Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully.

## Top tip



Keep out of reach



## Top tip



Put them out. Right out!

## Top tip



Plan an escape route

### Plan an escape route

- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- The best route is the normal way in and out of your home.
- Think of a second route in case the first one is blocked.
- Practice your escape plan.
- Review your plan if the layout of your home changes.

## Top tip



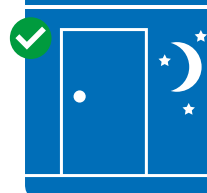
Get out, stay out and call 999

### What to do if there is a fire

- Don't tackle fires yourself, call the Fire Service.
- Get everyone out as soon as possible.
- If there's smoke, keep low where the air is clearer.
- Before you open a door check if it's warm. If it is, don't open it – fire is on the other side.
- Call 999 as soon as you're clear of the building.
- Deaf or Hearing impaired? Visit [www.emergencysms.org.uk](http://www.emergencysms.org.uk) for more info.

**999 calls are free.**

## Top tip



Close inside doors at night

### Make a bedtime check

- Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading.
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on – like your freezer.
- Put candles and cigarettes out properly.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them.

In association with



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

### Contact details:

Telephone: 0115 967 0880  
E-mail: [enquiries@notts-fire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@notts-fire.gov.uk)  
Minicom: 0115 967 5951  
Text Number: 0115 824 0400

Website: [www.notts-fire.gov.uk](http://www.notts-fire.gov.uk)

## Making us feel trapped or responsible for the abuse

“ He **blamed me** for everything. He'd had a bad childhood and I didn't want to make things more difficult for him! I forgot my own needs ”

“ You can go, the kids stay with me ”

“ No one will **believe** you ”

“ I'll tell social services you **can't cope** – look at you, you're a mess – they'll take the kids off you ”

“ Just where do you think you're going to live – there's **no way** I'll let you get this house ”

“ I was so **frightened** – I don't think anyone realised just how much ”

## The role of the Police

### What can you expect of the Police if you report domestic abuse?

Most domestic abuse calls are dealt with by customer service advisors in the police control room. They will try to gather as much information as possible. They may also give you some advice on how to stay safe before sending officers to your address. Domestic abuse incidents are prioritised and wherever possible, more than one officer will always attend.

Their first priority will be the safety and well-being of you and any children. Their role is to investigate – not to mediate, counsel or allocate blame. They will always give you the opportunity of being listened to and spoken to separately, away from your abuser.

If the police arrest your abuser, it can act as a deterrent against re-offending, at least for a short time. It can also demonstrate to your partner/ex-partner that the police take domestic abuse seriously, and that this behaviour is not acceptable.

The police will also ask if you would like them to pass your details on to an agency who can offer you further help (e.g. Women's Aid or Victim Support).

- **ALWAYS call 999 if you are frightened or in danger.**
- **Call in to your local police station** and ask to speak to an officer or call 101 and ask for someone from your local Neighbourhood Policing Team to give you a call for advice.
- **Clare's Law** You might like to ask about checks being made on your partner if you have become worried about their behaviour or feel they may have abused previous partners (also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme). You can ring 101 or go into a police station to apply for this.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention Order (DVPO)** This is an order the police can apply for in the aftermath of an incident in the home which will require your abuser to stay away from you/the home, for a period of up to 28 days, so you have more safe time and space to decide what you want to do for the future. If it breached they are arrested and will be put before the court.

## Finding a way out & growing stronger

“ The best thing I ever did was go to see a solicitor for some advice about the children – she knew her stuff – completely **reassured** me ”

“ The social worker who got in touch with me told me she would only have **concerns** about the children IF I went back to him – once she knew I intended to stay away she was so **supportive** ”

“ I hadn't really considered **my rights** over our home – I was so used to taking second place and doing as I was told, so speaking with a housing advisor at the council made me see things in a completely different light and I would always say to other people going through abuse to get the right advice from the right people who know what they are talking about because it does **help you** ”

“ The police were very **helpful and supportive** to me when they came out ”

“ Block him on Facebook straight away, get another phone, and don't get drawn into contacting him ”

“ Abusers may use pets as a way of **scaring** you into staying, or you might not want to leave them in the home if you have to go – Women's Aid (WAIS) has a pet fostering scheme to help with this ”

“ Stay well and healthy – see your GP if you are experiencing anxiety, depression or sleep problems – **you aren't alone** ”

“ It took me a long while to get my **confidence** back, but now I am strong and confident and it's all down to the help and support of others ”

“ Make yourself go to meetings and groups and meet others who have been through the same as you – it is the best **help** you can ask for ”

“ **Don't give up** – cry if you have to, get lots of advice, keep good people around you – one day you will not feel so hopeless, and one day you will realise that he wasn't able to destroy you after all – you're still here and you have a life to live free of him ”



## Local help with issues of domestic abuse & signposting

### 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline

■ Tel: 0808 800 0340 (Women) ■ [www.wais.org.uk](http://www.wais.org.uk)

This helpline is run by WAIS – they also run support services in the City of Nottingham and South Nottinghamshire.

### Broxtowe Women's Project (North Broxtowe & Stapleford areas)

■ Tel: 01773 719111 ■ Text: 07914 634190 – both lines between 10am - 1pm: Mon – Fri

■ Email: [enquiries@broxtowewomensproject.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@broxtowewomensproject.org.uk)

■ [www.broxtowewomensproject.org.uk](http://www.broxtowewomensproject.org.uk)

### Midlands Women's Aid (South Broxtowe)

■ Tel: 0115 925 7647 ■ Email: [midlandswomensaid@btconnect.com](mailto:midlandswomensaid@btconnect.com)

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

### Rushcliffe Borough Council Domestic Abuse Service

■ Tel: 0115 914 8287 ■ Email: [wgreen@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:wgreen@rushcliffe.gov.uk)

For women and men who live in Rushcliffe.

### Rape Crisis

■ Tel: 0115 941 0440 ■ [www.nottinghamrapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.nottinghamrapecrisis.org.uk)

### Victim Support

■ Tel: 0300 303 1947 (to access local services)

Victim Support are a generic provider of support services for victims of crime.

### Housing Issues and advice

These include schemes to increase home security (Sanctuary)

■ Broxtowe: 0115 917 7777

■ Gedling: 0115 901 3681

■ Rushcliffe: 0115 981 9911

### Police

■ Emergencies: 999

■ Police Non Emergency: 101

## Concerns about safeguarding

■ MASH (Multi agency Safeguarding Hub): Children: 0300 500 8090

■ Vulnerable Adults: 0300 500 80 80

■ Out of hours children emergency duty: 0300 456 4546

## National sources of help and advice with domestic abuse & signposting

### Broken Rainbow (LGBT)

■ Tel: 0300 999 5428 (National Helpline) ■ [www.brokenrainbow.org.uk](http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk)

### Freedom Programme

■ [www.freedomprogramme.co.uk](http://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk)

Information on the Freedom Programme and list of accredited facilitators locally

### Forced Marriage Unit

■ Tel: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151

### Men's Advice Line

■ Tel: 0808 801 0327 (National Helpline) ■ [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

### National Women's Aid helpline

■ Tel: 0808 2000 247

## Stalking

### Digital Trust

■ [www.digital-trust.org](http://www.digital-trust.org)

### National Stalking Helpline

■ Tel: 0808 802 0300 ■ [www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)

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