



## DOMESTIC ABUSE OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

In the OVMC we will

- Consider the best place to display the OVMC domestic abuse statement and information about helplines and local services.
- Appoint a named individual who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR).
- Follow the process on how to respond to concerns about domestic abuse. If parishes are in any doubt as to what action to take they should refer to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA).
- The Church of England requires domestic abuse training to be undertaken by those who will have roles with survivors and alleged or known perpetrators. This includes those in leadership positions including pastoral and safeguarding roles.
- Discuss domestic abuse in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation.
- Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour by church members.
- Encourage leaders and those who preach to speak against domestic abuse in teaching, sermons, prayers and parish documents remembering that many of the congregation may have a personal experience.

For full information please refer to <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/responding-well-to-domestic-abuse-formatted-master-copy-030317.pdf>

### Definition of domestic abuse

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse perpetrated by those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

The Church recognises the additional categories of:

- neglect
- spiritual
- digital abuse

Examples of all these categories are:

#### **Psychological/emotional**

Shouting; swearing; frightening; blaming; ignoring or humiliating someone; blackmailing them; threatening harm to children or pets if they misbehave; ridiculing every aspect of their appearance and skills; keeping

them deliberately short of sleep; being obsessively and irrationally jealous; keeping them isolated from friends and family; threatening suicide or self-harm.

### **Coercive Control**

– Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created an offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship which occurs when a person repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person to whom they are personally connected that is controlling or coercive and that has a serious effect on their victim. Victims who experience coercive and controlling behaviour that stops short of serious physical violence, but amounts to extreme psychological and emotional abuse, can bring their alleged or known perpetrators to justice. The offence closes a gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour that occurs during a relationship between intimate partners, former partners who still live together or family members.

### **Physical**

Causing physical pain or discomfort in any way, for example, hitting; slapping; burning; pushing; restraining; giving too much medication or the wrong medication; assault with everyday implements such as kitchen knives; kicking; biting; punching; shoving; smashing someone's possessions; imprisoning them; or forcing them to use illegal drugs as a way of blackmailing and controlling them.

### **Sexual**

Forcing someone to take part in any sexual activity without consent, e.g. rape or sexual assault, including marital rape; forcing them or blackmailing them into sexual acts with other people; sexual name calling; imposition of dress codes upon a partner; involvement in the sex trade or pornography; knowingly passing on Sexually Transmitted Infections; controlling access to contraception; sexual exploitation; trafficking.

### **Financial**

The illegal or unauthorised use of someone's property, money, pension book or other valuables; forcing them to take out loans; keeping them in poverty; demanding to know every penny they spend; refusing to let them use transport or have money to pay for it.

### **Neglect**

Depriving or causing deprivation of basic standards of care as per the Care Act 2014 guidance document section 14. For example, a failure to provide necessary care, assistance, guidance or attention that causes, or is reasonably likely to cause a person physical, mental or emotional harm or substantial damage to or loss of assets.

### **Spiritual**

Telling someone that God hates them; refusing to let them worship (e.g. not allowing a partner to go to church); using faith as a weapon to control and terrorise them for the perpetrator's personal pleasure or gain; using religious teaching to justify abuse (e.g. 'submit to your husband'), or to compel forgiveness.

### **Digital**

The use of technology (e.g. texting and social media) to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner. Though it is perpetrated online, this type of abuse has a strong impact on a victim's real life. For example, the 'revenge porn' offence i.e. disclosing private sexual photographs via digital media with an intention to cause distress.

Domestic abuse may involve areas of risk that are complex and require safeguarding support from specialist agencies. These may include so-called 'honour based violence', forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child to adult abuse and elder abuse, the abuse of children and/or women related to 'possession by evil spirits' or 'dowry problems'.

Indeed, the need to protect remains the main imperative, irrespective of the cultural context in which domestic abuse occurs. Such forms of abuse are common across the various religious communities and are often justified by religious and cultural beliefs as a way of maintaining patriarchal power and control. Often the violence or abuse is perpetrated by members of the extended family, with the collusion of others in the community.

### **CHALLENGING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Many people will have misconceptions and attitudes about domestic abuse which are incorrect. Here are some common myths about what domestic abuse is and who it affects:

**Myth 1:** It happens to certain types of people. It can be thought that domestic abuse happens to a certain type of person – based on socio-economic status, religious or cultural backgrounds, or a perception of strength and resilience. This is not the case. Domestic abuse and violence can happen to anyone at any time.

**Myth 2:** It happens because of... Domestic abuse is complex, and is not necessarily explained by a single theory. It can be thought that domestic abuse happens because of alcohol abuse, unemployment, child abuse, mental or physical ill health, or other environmental factors. Although these may be contributory factors, abuse happens because an abusive person chooses to behave in a way that enables them to have power and control over another person – excuses and reasons are given to justify abusive behaviour.

**Myth 3:** A victim can cause a perpetrator to become abusive. Often a perpetrator will tell a victim that they caused them to do it. A victim is never responsible if a perpetrator chooses to behave in an abusive and controlling way.

**Myth 4:** A victim can fully understand what is happening to them. When someone is in a relationship in which they are subject to abuse they will often feel very confused about what is happening, and they are sometimes not sure that what they are experiencing is abuse.

**Myth 5:** A victim can choose to leave and if they don't, they are choosing to stay. People ask why victims stay in a situation where they are suffering abuse and assume that it is easy to leave and to escape the situation and start a new life. This is not the case on a practical and emotional level. A perpetrator of abuse will work to ensure that the victim feels that they cannot cope on their own. Leaving is a very dangerous thing to do. It may also be financially impossible to leave the situation, particularly when there are children. Victims often do not have a choice in leaving and may feel, or be, threatened that if they leave they will be in danger. It may be safer to stay than to leave.

**Myth 6:** Domestic abuse is about anger. Domestic abuse is a choice to act in a controlling way; it is not about being angry and losing control.

**Myth 7:** Domestic abuse doesn't happen in our church. Domestic abuse happens in every community, including within the Church.

### **Resources**

[The \(Devon and Cornwall\) Victim Care services website](#)

[Victim Support Devon and Cornwall | Victim Care Devon and Cornwall](#)

[Women's Aid](#)

Provides services for women and children who have been affected by the experience of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse.

0808 2000 247

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk>

### Refuge

Refuge is the national charity which provides a wide range of specialist domestic violence services to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

0808 2000 247

[refuge](#)

### Rape Crisis

Rape Crisis Centres offer a range of services for women and girls who have been raped or experienced another form of sexual violence.

0808 802 9999

[Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge

0808 2000 247

### National Centre for Domestic Violence

The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence.

24 hour helpline: 0800 970 2070

<http://www.ncdv.org.uk/>

### NSPCC ChildLine

Free, confidential service for young people up to the age of 19. Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online, send ChildLine an email or post on the message boards.

0800 1111

[NSPCC | The UK children's charity | NSPCC](#)

### NSPCC Helpline

Free helpline service for anyone with concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, even one in their own home. You can speak to a NSPCC counsellor 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Advice and support is provided parents and carers and consultations with professionals are offered. We will listen to your concerns, offer advice and support and can take action on your behalf if a child is in danger.

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/)

[Report child abuse | NSPCC](#)

### Galop

Galop gives advice and support to LGBT people who have experienced hate crime, sexual violence and domestic abuse.

LGBT domestic violence helpline: 0800 999 5428

[Galop - the LGBT+ anti-violence charity](#)

### Respect

The Respect phone line is a confidential helpline offering advice, information and support to help you stop being violent and abusive to your partner.

0808 802 4040

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

Legal support (National Centre for Domestic Violence):

provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse. 0844 8044 999

<https://www.ncdv.org.uk>

Samaritans

A 24-hour helpline for any person in emotional distress

116 123

[Samaritans |](http://www.samaritans.org)