# **Domestic abuse: how to get help**

**Recognise domestic abuse**

Does your partner, ex-partner or someone you live with:

* cut you off from family and friends and intentionally isolate you?
* bully, threaten, or control you?
* take control of your finances?
* monitor or limit your use of technology?
* physically and/or sexually abuse you?

Domestic abuse is not always physical violence. It can also include:

* coercive control and ‘gaslighting’
* economic abuse
* online abuse
* threats and intimidation
* emotional abuse
* sexual abuse

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality or background.

If you believe that you are a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs that you can look out for including:

* being withdrawn, or being isolated from your family and friends
* having bruises, burns or bite marks on you
* having your finances controlled, or not being given enough to buy food, medication or pay bills
* not being allowed to leave your house, or stopped from going to college or work
* having your internet or social media use monitored, or someone else reading your texts, emails or letters
* being repeatedly belittled, put down or told you are worthless
* being pressured into sex or sexual contact
* being told that abuse is your fault, or that you’re overreacting

See [more signs to look for](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-recognise-the-signs/domestic-abuse-recognise-the-signs#how-to-recognise-domestic-abuse-in-a-relationship).

**Get help and support**

All forms of domestic abuse are not acceptable in any situation.

If you’re experiencing domestic abuse and feel frightened of, or controlled by, a partner, an ex-partner or family member, it’s important to remember that it’s not your fault and there is no shame in seeking help.

It may seem like a difficult step to take, but there is support available and #YouAreNot Alone.

Free, confidential support and advice is available to victims and their concerned family members or friends, 24 hours a day.

| **Nation** | **Helpline** | **Contact** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| England | [Refuge’s National Domestic Abuse Helpline](https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/) | 0808 2000 247 [Online live chat](https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Chat-to-us-online) [Web form](https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us) |
| Northern Ireland | [Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline](https://dsahelpline.org/) | 0808 802 1414 [Online live chat](https://dsahelpline.org/) [help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org) |
| Scotland | [Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](https://sdafmh.org.uk/) | 0800 027 1234 [Online live chat](https://sdafmh.org.uk/) [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk) |
| Wales | [Live Fear Free](https://gov.wales/live-fear-free) | 0808 80 10 800 [Online live chat](https://gov.wales/live-fear-free/contact-live-fear-free) [Text](https://gov.wales/live-fear-free/about-live-fear-free-text-service) [info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales) |
| UK-wide | The [Men’s Advice Line](https://mensadviceline.org.uk/) run by Respect is a confidential helpline specifically for male victims. | 0808 801 0327 [info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk) |

**Bright Sky app**

[Bright Sky](https://www.hestia.org/brightsky) is a mobile app and website for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else.

The app can be downloaded for free from the app stores. Only download the app if it is safe for you to do so and if you are sure that your phone isn’t being monitored.

**Women’s Aid local support services directory**

Women’s Aid have a [directory of domestic abuse support services across the UK](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/).

If you are experiencing domestic abuse or are worried about friends or family, you can access the [Women’s Aid live chat service](https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/) 7 days a week, 10am to 6pm.

[helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)

**Victim Support**

Victim Support run these services for victims and survivors of any abuse or crime, regardless of when it occurred or if the crime was reported to the police:

* free, independent and confidential 24/7 Supportline 08 08 16 89 111
* [live chat service](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/live-chat/)
* [My Support Space - free online resource](https://www.mysupportspace.org.uk/)

**Ask for ANI codeword**

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need immediate help, ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately) in participating pharmacies and Jobcentres (Jobs and Benefits Offices in Northern Ireland).

When you ask for ANI, you will be offered a private space, provided with a phone and asked if you need support from the police or other domestic abuse support services.

To find your nearest participating provider, search using the postcode checker on the [Ask for Ani page on the Enough website](https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/get-support/ask-for-ani).



Ask for ANI logo used in participating pharmacies and Jobcentres (Jobs and Benefits Offices in Northern Ireland).

**Safe Spaces**

Ask for ANI is delivered in partnership with Safe Spaces, a safe and confidential room where victims can take some time to reflect, access information on specialist support services or call friends or family.

[Safe Spaces](https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/) are also available in Boots, Morrisons, Superdrug and Well pharmacies, TSB banks and independent pharmacies across the UK.

Find your [nearest Safe Space](https://uksaysnomore.org/safespaces/).

**Check whether someone has an abusive past**

If you are concerned that a new, former or existing partner has an abusive past you can ask the police to check under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as ‘Clare’s Law’). This is your ‘right to ask’. If records show that you may be at risk of domestic abuse, the police will consider disclosing the information. A disclosure can be made if it is legal, proportionate and necessary to do so.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member, you can apply for a disclosure on behalf of someone you know.

You can make a request to the police for information about a person’s previous violent offending in person at the police station or elsewhere, by telephone, by email, online or as part of a police investigation. Support agencies and services can also help you ask the police about this.

**Get a court order to protect you or your child**

If you’re a victim of domestic abuse you can apply for a court order or injunction to protect yourself or your child from:

* your current or previous partner
* a family member
* someone you currently or previously lived with

This is called a non-molestation or occupation order.

You can apply online, by email or by post.

[Get a court order if you’ve been the victim of domestic abuse](https://www.gov.uk/injunction-domestic-violence).

**Support someone you know**

If you are worried that a friend, neighbour or loved one is a victim of domestic abuse, you can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.

Or you can contact the other support services listed on this page.

Seeking help for someone you know can be challenging but #YouAreNotalone. Domestic abuse advisers will offer confidential, non-judgemental information and advice on the options available to you helping you to keep safe and make informed choices.

If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, you should always call 999.

If someone confides in you, there is [more information on how to support a friend who is being abused](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-recognise-the-signs/domestic-abuse-recognise-the-signs#support-a-friend-if-theyre-being-abused).

**If you are an employer**

Let your employees know that if they are facing domestic abuse you want to help them to get help. Stay in regular contact with employees you know, or fear, may be facing abuse and if you lose contact with them, take swift action to visit them. If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, always call 999.

Encourage employees to look out for others who may be facing domestic abuse and signpost them to support. Your staff may also be worried about their own abusive behaviour at this time. There is no excuse for domestic abuse, no matter what stresses you are under and support is available.

Hestia’s [Respond to Abuse Advice Line](https://www.hestia.org/respond-to-abuse) is a free resource for employers. Employers can call 020 3879 3695 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or email [adviceline.eb@hestia.org](mailto:adviceline.eb@hestia.org) for support, guidance or information about domestic abuse and how to support employees and colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.

The [Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse](https://www.eida.org.uk/) website provides resources to support employers including an [employers’ toolkit](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cd83ed84d871178f0307100/t/5cfe752a01f3c40001e7516d/1560180083314/bitc_phe_domestic_abuse_toolkit.pdf).

**If you are a professional working in the domestic abuse sector**

[SafeLives](https://safelives.org.uk/) provides guidance and support to professionals and those working in the domestic abuse sector, as well as additional advice for those at risk.

**Find additional information and support**

If you want to access help specifically to cater to your background and needs or want support and help for specific types of abuse there are several organisations that can help - see [Domestic abuse: specialist sources of support](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-get-help-for-specific-needs-or-situations/domestic-abuse-specialist-sources-of-support).

You can also find additional information and support here on topics including:

* help for children and young people
* welfare benefits and housing advice
* help if you don’t have settled status in the UK
* support for specific types of abuse

**Get help if you think you might be an abuser**

If you are concerned about your behaviour or the behaviour of someone you know, there is support available.

The [Respect Phoneline](https://respectphoneline.org.uk/) is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are abusing their partners and families. It is open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm. The helpline also takes calls from partners or ex-partners, friends and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.

A webchat service is available Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am to 11am and from 3pm to 4pm.

Telephone: 0808 802 4040

**How to call the police when you can’t speak**

If you are in danger and unable to talk on the phone, call 999 and listen to the questions from the operator and, if you can, respond by coughing or tapping on the handset.

**Call 999 from a mobile**

If prompted, press 55 to [Make Yourself Heard (PDF, 348KB)](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/research-learning/Silent_solution_guide.pdf) and this will transfer your call to the police. Pressing 55 only works on mobiles and does not allow police to track your location.

**Call 999 from a landline**

If the operator can only hear background noise and cannot decide whether an emergency service is needed, you will be connected to a police call handler.

If you replace the handset, the landline may remain connected for 45 seconds in case you pick up again.

When 999 calls are made from landlines, information about your location should be automatically available to the call handlers to help provide a response.

**If you are deaf or can’t use a phone**

You can register with the [emergencySMS](https://www.emergencysms.net/). Text REGISTER to 999. You will get a text which tells you what to do next. Do this when it is safe so you can text when you are in danger.