

# Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse

## Information Pack

This information pack is about domestic abuse, what you can do about it and where you can get help, advice and support if you, or someone you know, is experiencing domestic abuse. The pack is for anyone who is - or has been - in an abusive relationship. It also provides an essential source of information for professionals in supporting and working with victims.

Tackling Domestic abuse is a priority for all agencies across Worcestershire; however, no one agency can achieve this on their own. We are “Stronger Together” working in partnership in seeking to make a difference to some of the most vulnerable persons within our communities.

- **1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will sometime in their lifetime experience domestic abuse.**
- **Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on children.**
- **2 women are murdered every week by a current or previous partner in the UK.**

This statistic has been the same for the past 20 years. We need to change this. This information pack seeks to raise awareness of how you can help break this cycle and better identify, support and signpost victims to the range of excellent services across Worcestershire. We need to remember that it takes tremendous courage to ask for help and need to get it right first time.... there may not be a second chance.

### **And remember! If you are in an abusive relationship:**

- **You are not the only one**
- **You are not to blame**
- **You cannot change your abuser's behaviour Ignoring abuse is dangerous**
- **There is life after an abusive relationship**

**Don't suffer in silence - Tell someone**

## What is domestic abuse?

**Domestic abuse** - also known as domestic violence, spousal abuse, or intimate partner violence (IPV) - can be broadly defined as...

**ANY** incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

**Controlling behaviour** is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour

**Coercive behaviour** is an act or pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim (see separate insert on understanding controlling or coercive behaviour).

## Who are we?

The Worcestershire Forum against Domestic Abuse is an independent inter-agency partnership that brings together a range of voluntary and statutory organizations and individuals to work on tackling issues related to domestic abuse across Worcestershire. The Forum work closely with Worcestershire County Council and the District Councils of Worcester, Wychavon, Malvern Hills, Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch.

The Forum aims to reduce domestic abuse and sexual violence by strengthening inter-agency working, raising public awareness and changing attitudes. This is achieved through multi-agency meetings, policy development, lobbying, awareness-raising campaigns and training. The forum works closely with Women's Aid, Rooftop Housing and Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre and other domestic abuse and sexual abuse service providers to ensure that policy work is practice-based, consistent and up to date, and to provide resources to support the effective delivery of services.

## Our vision

The Forum has the ultimate goal of preventing and reducing the incidents of domestic abuse and sexual violence in all its forms. The Forums approach in promoting their strategies will be to strive to benefit all communities, to end abuse and the social attitudes and tolerance which condone it.

Everyone in our society has a part to play in raising awareness about both Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, its prevention and protection for those affected. Our message is clear and simple to victims/survivors, **"Please don't suffer in silence"**.

# Recognising domestic abuse

There are many signs of domestic abuse. If you think you are in an abusive relationship ask yourself this question:

## Are you afraid of your partner?

Fear is the main way an abusive partner will control you and continue with their abuse unchecked. If you are suffering from emotional abuse you may feel afraid, you may avoid doing certain things for fear of angering your partner, you may feel that you cannot do anything right or that you deserve to be hurt or abused.

Another sign of domestic abuse is control. Your partner may be abusing you through controlling and manipulative behaviour - checking up on you, demanding to know where you've been and the conversations you've had.

Your partner may deny you money or force financial control on you while undermining your ability to cope. Your partner may be violent towards you sexually or physically forcing you to do things against your will or degrading you. They may even blame you for their abusive behaviour and treat you more as an object than a human being.

Signs of domestic abuse can often go unnoticed, listed below are 16 signs that may indicate someone is affected by domestic abuse.

### Injuries

Bruising, cuts or injuries occurring frequently, or in areas that can be hidden by clothing, or perhaps walking stiffly or appearing sore. Sometimes victims give explanations for injuries that just don't fit.

### Excuses

Victims often minimise or excuse injuries, perhaps blaming a 'clumsy' nature or giving the same explanation each time.

### Stress

Victims often display physical symptoms related to stress, other anxiety disorders or depression, such as panic attacks, feelings of isolation and an inability to cope. Victims may even talk about suicide attempts or self-harming.

### Lack of opportunity to communicate independently

Perhaps the partner talks over the victim, or for him or her, and he or she may be reluctant to speak. The partner can often appear controlling or make disparaging remarks.

### Absent from work

Often off work, taking time off without notice or frequently late.

### Personality changes

You may notice personality changes when around the partner or the appearance of 'walking on eggshells' when in his or her company. A victim may be jumpy or show nervous mannerisms. Such personality changes may become evident over time, even when the partner is not around

### Low self-esteem

A victim of domestic abuse often has low self-esteem when talking about the relationship or life in general and may seem sad, cry or depressed.

### Unwanted pregnancy/termination

Pregnancy often triggers the start of domestic abuse. A woman may be unhappy at being pregnant, not wish to continue with the pregnancy, or be forced into having a termination.

## Self-blame

You may notice that he or she may take the blame for anything that happens, whether it's at work, with the children or with friends. A victim of domestic abuse often blames him or herself for the abuse.

## Lack of money

Perhaps he or she never seems to have any money on because her partner is withholding money as a form of control.

## Stopping socialising

He or she may make excuses for not going out with friends, or suddenly pull out of social get togethers at the last minute.

## The abuser displaying irrational behaviour

A victim may say that his or her partner is jealous, irrational or possessive, accusing him or her of having affairs or flirting.

## Substance abuse

Victims may use alcohol or drugs to cope or even prescribed drugs such as tranquillisers or anti-depressants.

## Lack of assertiveness

Perhaps he or she can't make decisions, stick up for him or herself, give an opinion or displays a lack of interest.

## Damage to property

Damage in the home or even harm to pets.

## Unwillingness to give out personal details

He or she may not give friends and colleagues an address or telephone number and may insist that he or she contacts you, so that you don't turn up on their doorstep.

# Make a plan

Admitting to yourself and others that you are experiencing domestic abuse may seem very difficult but it is an important step in the journey towards seeking protection for yourself and your children, if you have any.

## Remember! It is not your fault. You are not alone. You have the right to live your life free from fear.

Sometimes victims of domestic abuse leave home in a hurry in order to escape from assault or to make a break for safety and sanity.

## It can help if you make some plans

Making a crisis plan is a way of feeling more in control, more positive and confident. Here is a suggested plan of action that you can add to or change to suit your circumstances:

- If you don't have a mobile phone, find somewhere with quick and easy access to a telephone, such as a neighbour or a close friend
- Make – and always carry with you – a list of emergency numbers. Include friends, relatives and local police as even well-known numbers can be forgotten in a panic
- Try to save some money for bus, train or taxi fares
- Have an extra set of keys cut for your home and car
- Keep the keys and a set of clothes for you and your children packed and ready in a bag somewhere easily accessible
- Explain to your children - if they are old enough to understand – that you might have to leave home in a hurry. Assure them you will take them with you or arrange for them to join you as soon as possible. Discuss your crisis plan with them.

## If you have more time to plan, do as much as possible of the following:

- Leave when your partner is not around
- Take all your children with you
- Take legal and financial papers, marriage and birth certificates, court orders, national health cards, passports, driving licence, child benefit books, address book, bank books, cheque book, credit cards and all other important documents
- Take any personal possessions that have sentimental value such as photographs or jewellery
- Take your children's favourite toys
- Take clothing for at least several days
- Take any medicines you or your children might need
- If you have pets and are worried about them arrange for someone to care for them. An animal charity may be able to help
- If you do leave and realise you have forgotten something important you can always arrange for the protection of a police escort to return home to collect it.

## Who to contact?

### West Mercia Police

For emergency Telephone **999**

For non-emergency Telephone **101**

### Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Service (DAS) and 24-hour Helpline

Telephone **0800 980 3331**

Website **[www.westmerciawomensaid.org](http://www.westmerciawomensaid.org)**

The Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Service is delivered in partnership by West Mercia Women's Aid and Rooftop Housing Group. The service delivers free, confidential advice and support to female and male survivors, young people and children. The helpline deals with any queries from people who have or are experiencing domestic abuse, or from those who may be worried about someone experiencing it. It is the single point of access

to services. You can call if you need a listening ear, advice, access to refuge accommodation, support, advocacy and/or someone to talk to. It also provides support, advice and guidance to professionals.

The service provides the following support:

- One to one outreach support
- Emergency Refuge and safe house accommodation in Worcestershire
- Group support and recovery programmes for men and women.
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors
- Survivor Networks and Peer Support
- Training for professionals

Referrals and enquiries for all aspects of support can be made via the 24hour telephone helpline

**0800 980 3331**

### Worcestershire Male Domestic Abuse Helpline

Telephone **0800 014 9082**

Operating: Tuesday's 11am-3pm

To make a referral email **[male.support@rooftopgroup.org](mailto:male.support@rooftopgroup.org)**

For a secure email **[male.support@rooftop.cjsm.net](mailto:male.support@rooftop.cjsm.net)**

The helpline deals with any queries from men who have or are experiencing domestic abuse, or from those who may be worried about someone experiencing it. Outside of the above hours the voicemail service will be regularly monitored and responded to. If in need of immediate danger/ support call **999** or **101** Or if you are in need of immediate Domestic Abuse Support, please call **0800 980 3331**.

## Worcestershire Family Front Door

Are you worried that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and needs immediate protection? Family Front Door can be contacted on telephone **01905 822 666** from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm. Out of office hours contact the Emergency Duty team on telephone **01905 768020**. If there are safeguarding concerns and you feel the threshold is met for Children's Social Care Services, you can submit a cause for concern notification which can be found at:

[https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20641/are\\_you\\_a\\_professional\\_and\\_worried\\_about\\_child](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20641/are_you_a_professional_and_worried_about_child)

## National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV)

Telephone **0800 970 2070**

Provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation.

## West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WRSASC)

Telephone **01905 724514**

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

Email [isva@wmrsasc.org.uk](mailto:isva@wmrsasc.org.uk)

WRSASC is a free, confidential and non-judgemental service for men, women and children (aged 5 years or over) who have experienced rape, sexual assault, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or any form of sexual attack, whether physical, verbal or emotional. Our services include telephone support for survivors and their family or friends via our telephone helpline and face to face counselling support for clients aged 5 years and over. We have an Independent Sexual Advisory Service which provides practical and emotional support to men, women and children aged 5 years and over.

## Sexual Assault Referral Centre (The Glade)

Telephone **01886 833555 (18+)**

West Midlands Paediatric Service Telephone **0800 953 4133 (0-18)**

24hr Self-Referral Telephone **0808 178 2058**

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

The Glade in West Mercia offers a free and confidential service to men, women and children who have been victims of rape or sexual assault. The services that the Glade offers can be accessed via a police or self-referral. Where appropriate clients will be offered a forensic medical examination to gather evidence, advice about pregnancy and sexual health, medication where appropriate, referrals for ongoing and long-term support and/or to the client's GP and counselling. The Glade offers a safe and welcoming environment to victims of sexual violence.

## Childline

Telephone **0800 555 111**

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

ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline dedicated to children and young people. Whenever children need us, ChildLine will be there for them - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year.

## National Stalking

Telephone helpline **0808 802 0300**

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

The Helpline provides guidance and information to anybody who is currently or has previously been affected by harassment or stalking. The Helpline can provide guidance on:

- The law in relation to stalking and harassment in the United Kingdom
- Reporting stalking or harassment
- Effective gathering of evidence
- Ensuring your personal safety and that of your friends and family
- Practical steps to reduce the risk

## **Paladin (National Stalking Advocacy Service)**

Telephone **020 3866 4107**

Website **[www.paladinservice.co.uk](http://www.paladinservice.co.uk)**

Paladin assists high risk victims of stalking throughout England and Wales. A number of Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs) ensure high risk victims of stalking are supported and that a coordinated community response is developed locally to keep victims and their children safe.

## **Victim Support (Local)**

Victim Assessment & Referral Centre Telephone **01905 726896**

Victim Support line Telephone **0808 168 9111**

Website **[www.victim support.org.uk](http://www.victim support.org.uk)**

We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents. Our caseworkers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to people who have been threatened or abused. Our services are confidential, free and available to everyone. Victims are usually put in touch with us by the police. But you can also contact us directly.

## **Karma Nirvana**

Telephone **0800 5999 247**

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

Providing support and advice around Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

## **Men's Advice Line**

Telephone **0808 801 0327**

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

Confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members). They help by giving you time to tell your story; offering emotional support; providing practical advice; signposting you to other services for specialist help.

## **Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**

Website **[www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/)**

Are you worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating with you online?

Making a report : [ceop.police.uk/CEOP-Reporting/](http://ceop.police.uk/CEOP-Reporting/)

## **National Rape Crisis**

Telephone Helpline (Freephone) **0808 802 9999**

National LGBT Domestic Abuse Telephone helpline **0300 999 5428**

Email **[help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)**

Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic abuse.

# MARAC

## Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

### What is MARAC?

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented by the IDVA, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim. In Worcestershire MARAC meets twice a month, once in North Worcestershire and once in South Worcestershire.

### Referral Criteria

- Professional Judgement
- Visible High Risk
- Potential Escalation
- Repeat victimisation

### Referral Process

- Complete a Referral Form
- Inform victim and obtain consent
- Liaise with your agency MARAC representative
- If appropriate, complete DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Honour Based Violence ) Risk Assessment

### MARAC Coordinator:

Email [worcestershiremarac@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:worcestershiremarac@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

### How IDVAs and MARACs work

IDVAs and MARACs support vulnerable families to live safely in their own home

1. A victim experiences domestic abuse and other vulnerabilities
2. A frontline professional risk assesses the victim & refers her to an IDVA & MARAC
3. The IDVA establishes a relationship of trust with the victim & provides immediate practical support
4. Agencies attend the MARAC to share information & create an action plan. The victim is represented by the IDVA
5. The IDVA's close relationship with the victim enables her to coordinate the action plan
6. The action plan is implemented & agencies support the victim to live safely in her home

# DASH Risk Assessment

## (Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Honour based violence)

The DASH risk assessment is based on research and lessons learnt and seeks to identify and assess levels of risk at a given time by asking the below series of questions. It seeks to identify those at the highest risk for referral into MARAC to collectively manage that risk down.

REMEMBER : circumstances can change and the risk assessment should be subject of regular review. Dynamic assessments save lives.

1. Has the current incident resulted in injury?
2. Are you very frightened?
3. What are you afraid of? Is it further injury or violence?
4. Do you feel isolated from family/friends i.e. does (*insert name of abuser* ) try to stop you from seeing friends/family/doctor or others?
5. Are you feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts?
6. Have you separated or tried to separate from (*insert name of abuser* ) within the past year?
7. Is there conflict over child contact?
8. Does (*insert name of abuser* ) constantly text, call, contact, follow, stalk or harass you?
9. Are you pregnant or have you recently had a baby (within the last 18 months)?
10. Is the abuse happening more often?
11. Is the abuse getting worse?
12. Does (*insert name of abuser* ) try to control everything you do and/or are they excessively jealous?
13. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever used weapons or objects to hurt you?
14. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever threatened to kill you, your children or someone else and you believed them?
15. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever attempted to strangle/ choke/suffocate/drown you?
16. Does (*insert name of abuser* ) do or say things of a sexual nature that make you feel bad or that physically hurt you or someone else?
17. Is there any other person who has threatened you or who you are afraid of?
18. Do you know if (*insert name of abuser* ) has hurt anyone else?
19. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever mistreated an animal or the family pet?
20. Are there any financial issues? For example, are you dependent on (*insert name of abuser* ) for money/ have they recently lost their job/other financial issues?
21. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) had problems in the past year with drugs (prescription or other), alcohol or mental health leading to problems in leading a normal life?
22. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever threatened or attempted suicide?
23. Has (*insert name of abuser* ) ever broken bail/an injunction and/or formal agreement for when they can see you and/or the children?
24. Do you know if (*insert name of abuser* ) has ever been in trouble with the police or has a criminal history?

# Am I in an Abusive Relationship?

## Self-Assessment Questionnaire

There are many signs and indicators that you may be in an abusive relationship. Below are a series of statements that may indicate that you are. This list is not definitive but provides some indicators of an unhealthy relationship. If you are concerned then contact the helpline on 0800 980 3331 for further advice and support. Do not attempt to tackle the abuse without speaking to the helpline as this may put yourself at increased risk of harm.

- My partner teases me in a hurtful way in public
- My partner calls me names such as stupid, or worse
- My partner acts jealous of my friends and/or family
- My partner checks up on me by phone or coming to my home/work
- My partner gets someone else to check up on me
- My partner insists I tell them who I am on my phone with/interacting with
- My partner blames me for their bad mood or problems
- My partner gets angry easily, I walk on eggshells
- My partner throws or destroys things when they are angry
- My partner hits walls/drives dangerously or does other things to scare me
- My partner drinks a lot or takes drugs
- My partner insists that I drink or take drugs when they do
- My partner accuses me of being interested in someone else
- My partner reads my texts/emails and goes through my bag
- My partner keeps my money from me
- My partner has threatened to hurt me
- My partner has threatened to hurt my family or friends
- My partner has hurt me
- My partner has hurt someone who is my family or friend
- My partner has threatened to harm my or someone else's pets
- My partner has actually hurt my or someone else's pets
- My partner has threatened suicide if I leave
- My partner has struck me with his hands or feet (punched/slap/kick)
- My partner has struck me with an object/threatened me with a weapon
- My partner has given me visible injuries (bruises/welts/cuts).
- I have had to administer first aid to myself due to injuries from my partner
- My injuries from my partner have meant I needed medical treatment
- My partner forces me to have sex when I don't want to
- My partner forces me to have sex in ways that I don't want to
- My partner has been in trouble with the police
- My partner acts one way in front of others and another way when we are alone
- My partner is secretive or lies about past relationships
- I feel isolated or alone and have no one I can really talk with
- I have lost friends because of my partner or some of their actions I no longer see my family or friends because of my partner
- I have thought about calling the police because my partner scares me
- I have thought about calling the police because my partner has been violent
- I have actually called the police on one or more occasions because of my partner I am afraid to call the police because of threats from my partner
- I live in fear of the consequences of telling anyone I'm being abused

# Local and National Schemes

## Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Claire's Law)

The aim of this scheme is to give members of the public a formal mechanism to make enquires about an individual who they are in a relationship with or who is in a relationship with someone they know, and there is a concern that the individual may be abusive towards their partner. If police checks show that the individual has a record of abusive offences, or there is other information to indicate the person you know is at risk, the police will consider sharing this information with the person(s) best placed to protect the potential victim. Advice and guidance is available at your local police station.

The scheme aims to enable potential victims to make an informed choice on whether to continue the relationship and provides help and support to assist the potential victim when making that informed choice.

For more information go to SafeLives website

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/DVDS%20guidance%20for%20MARACs%20FINAL.pdf>

## Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (Sarah's Law)

Threats to a child's safety are more likely to originate from a family member or a friend of a family than a complete stranger. Around 75 per cent of child sex offenders are related to or known to their victim. The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme has been developed to respond to this.

The scheme allows members of the public - parents, carers, guardians or interested third parties - to ask the police to tell them about a person's record of child sex offences if they are concerned about that person's access to a child. The police already disclose information about registered sex offenders and violent offenders in a controlled way to a variety of people, including head teachers, leisure centre managers, employers, landlords and parents. The disclosure scheme is an additional tool that the police can use to keep children safe.

For more information go to West Mercia Website <https://www.westmercia.police.uk/rqo/request/ri/request-information/sofd/child-sex-offender-data-sarahs-law/>

## Domestic Violence Protection Notice / Orders (DVPN's & DVPO's)

A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) is a notice served by the police against a person (an alleged perpetrator) where the police reasonably believes that the alleged perpetrator has been violent or has threatened violence. When considering whether to serve a DVPN, the police will have talked to all of those involved, including the victim. The police will serve a DVPN if they believe that a threat of violence by the alleged perpetrator exists and that it is necessary to protect you in your home.

The DVPN lasts for up to 48 hours. It will prohibit the alleged perpetrator from returning to, entering and being within a certain distance of your home, or face arrest; it will prohibit the alleged perpetrator from molesting the victim.

After 48 hours the alleged perpetrator will appear before the court and this can be extended for up to 28 days. It provides "breathing space" and time for agencies to work with the family and individuals.

For more information go to Worcestershire County Council website Domestic Violence Protection Notices / Orders

[https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20379/domestic\\_abuse\\_and\\_sexual\\_violence/1635/domestic\\_violence\\_protection\\_notices\\_orders/1](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20379/domestic_abuse_and_sexual_violence/1635/domestic_violence_protection_notices_orders/1)

# Information Sharing

## The Golden Thread of working in partnership



Effective Information sharing is at the very heart of partnership working. It is the “golden thread” in identifying, supporting and reducing risk to vulnerable people, both adults and children. Information sharing is a vital element in improving outcomes for all. It is therefore vitally important that practitioners share information appropriately as part of their day-to-day practice and do so confidently. Information sharing is like doing a jigsaw puzzle. We all have different pieces and it’s not until we share then that we start to realise the significance of what we have and how we can reduce “collective risk” and protect victims. Don’t underestimate the power and significance of your pieces of the jigsaw!

It’s important to remember there can be significant consequences for not sharing information. You must use your professional judgement to decide whether to share or not, and what information is appropriate to share. Remember that the Data Protection Act 1998 is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. There are three simple things to consider:-

- ✓ **Is it necessary to share the information?**
- ✓ **Is it justified to share the information?**
- ✓ **Is it proportionate to share the information?**

**Remember... BE BOLD, no child or Adult has ever died as a result of sharing information but sadly plenty have as a result of not - your information could be the missing piece**

Where possible it is desirable to obtain the consent of the person to share information. However, it may not be appropriate to inform a person that information is being shared or seek consent to this sharing. This is the case if informing them is likely to hamper the prevention or investigation of a serious crime or put any child or adult at significant risk of serious harm.

Below are some key links to helpful documents that underpin information sharing, providing practical advice and guidance.

- **“Striking the Balance” Practical Guidance on the application of Caldicott Guardian Principles to Domestic Violence and MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences)**  
Can be accessed from the department of health website  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/215064/dh\\_133594.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215064/dh_133594.pdf)
- **Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers**  
Can be accessed from the government website  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/721581/Information\\_sharing\\_advice\\_practitioners\\_safeguarding\\_services.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf)
- **Information Sharing GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018**  
Can be accessed from the SaferLives website  
<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Legal%20Grounds%20for%20Sharing%20Information%20Guidance.pdf>

# Understanding controlling or coercive behaviour

## Controlling and Coercive behaviour became a criminal offence on the 29th December 2015.

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. This offence sends a clear message that this form of domestic abuse can constitute a serious offence particularly in light of the violation of trust it represents and will provide better protection to victims experiencing repeated or continuous abuse. It sets out the importance of recognising the harm caused by coercion or control, the cumulative impact on the victim and that a repeated pattern of abuse can be more injurious and harmful than a single incident of violence.

Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident, it is a purposeful pattern of behaviour which takes place over time in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. This new offence focuses responsibility and accountability on the perpetrator who has chosen to carry out these behaviours. CCB is based around fear. Fear of the consequences of doing or not doing something. Not doing something will result in a punishment / further abuse.

### Types of behaviour

The types of behaviour associated with coercion or control may or may not constitute a criminal offence in their own right. It is important to remember that the presence of controlling or coercive behaviour does not mean that no other offence has been committed or cannot be charged. However, the perpetrator may limit space for action and exhibit a story of ownership and entitlement over the victim. Such behaviours might include:

- isolating a person from their friends and family;
- depriving them of their basic needs;
- monitoring their time;
- monitoring a person via online communication tools, using spyware. Intercepting messages/calls.
- taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, being made to account for their time, what to wear and when they can sleep;
- extreme jealousy - "If I can't have you, no one can"
- depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services;
- repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless;
- enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim;
- forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame.
- financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance;
- threats to hurt or kill (suicide/homicide/familicide)
- threats to a child;
- threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to 'out' someone).
- assault;
- damage to property (such as destruction of household goods and injury to pets);
- rape;
- preventing a person from having access to transport or from working.
- manipulation of information given to professionals.

**This is not an exhaustive list refer to the self-assessment questionnaire**

## Key Elements of the Offence

### For the offence to apply:

- The controlling or coercive behaviour must take place “repeatedly or continuously”. Continuously means on an ongoing basis (at least two occasions). This could mean, but is not limited to, actions which cause the victim to change their way of living. However, each case must be considered on an individual basis, there is no set number of incidents in which controlling or coercive behaviour has been displayed which must be proved. As much evidence as possible must be gathered to show that the behaviour is of a repetitive or continuous nature.
- The pattern of behaviour has to have a “serious effect” on the victim- this means that they have been caused to EITHER fear that violence will be used against them on “at least two occasions”, OR they have been caused serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on the victim’s usual day-to-day activities, this will usually require there to have been more than one incident. The offence does not state that the victim must fear violence that may be committed by the perpetrator only. For example, the victim may fear that the perpetrator has asked another person to commit violence against them.
- The behaviour must be such that the perpetrator knows or “ought to know” that it will have a serious effect on the victim. “Ought to know” means that which a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know.
- The perpetrator and victim have to be personally connected when the incidents took place- meaning that at the time the incidents took place they were in an intimate personal relationship (whether they lived together or not) or they lived together and were family members, or they lived together and had previously been in an intimate personal relationship. It is not necessary for the perpetrator and victim to still be cohabiting or in a relationship when the offence is reported as long as the incidents took place when they were “personally connected”, and after the offence came into force (29th December 2015). Previous incidents/behaviour can be introduced as “bad character” evidence.

## Stalking and Harassment

Case law suggests that the current law on stalking and harassment does not apply to controlling or coercive behaviour that takes place in an ongoing intimate relationship. The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour closes this gap in the law as it can take place in an ongoing relationship. There may be cases where the victim and perpetrator are no longer living together or in a relationship, and the perpetrator is still attempting to exert control over the victim, for example, by stalking or monitoring the victim, or threatening or intimidating them. In such cases stalking and harassment legislation should be used.

## Other considerations

It is important to consider how any additional needs and barriers may affect the ability and willingness of the individual victims to recognise or report abusive behaviour. Perpetrators may try to exploit such vulnerabilities in order to maintain control or try to prevent the victim from seeking help. Examples may include:

- Impairment (physical disability, mental health, learning difficulties etc)
- Ethnicity
- Immigration Status
- Fear of losing the children
- Financial abuse
- Drugs and alcohol
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender (LGB&T) individuals in relationships
- Forced Marriage
- “So, called” “Honour Based” violence/abuse (HBV)
- Age
- Adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA)

This is not an exhaustive list, to find out more visit the [Home Office website](#)

# Support and Recovery

## Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Service

### A partnership between West Mercia Women's Aid and Rooftop Housing Group

West Mercia Women's Aid and Rooftop Housing Group are working in partnership to deliver one support service in Worcestershire. Together we work to ensure we can continue to deliver a wide range of specialist individual and family support to manage and reduce risk for children, young people, women and men affected by Domestic Abuse. We aim to enhance wellbeing and quality of life for all clients.

Our referral pathway will ensure that you only need to know one phone number (the Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Helpline Telephone **0800 980 3331**) and there will be a single point of access for the wide range of support available in the county.

### Community support

We support clients to address the practical and emotional issues that may arise from domestic abuse such as; housing, financial, legal, alcohol/ substance misuse and health issues among many more. We provide group support through programmes and peer support; however, we recognise that not everyone is comfortable receiving support as part of a group so we also offer individual support.

### Refuge and safe house accommodation

We can provide temporary accommodation in Worcestershire for women or men and their children. We also provide:

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA)
- Recovery Programmes and Group Support
- Survivor Networks and Peer Support
- Training for professionals to understand the dynamics of domestic abuse

### Worcestershire Recovery Pathway

The service provides a comprehensive recovery pathway of programmes for women who are affected by domestic abuse.

### The Freedom Programme

A 12-week programme which supports women to understand the dynamics of domestic abuse. It assists women to understand the beliefs of an abuser and supports women to understand and recognise those beliefs that we all share.

### Power to Change

A 12-week programme that supports women to rebuild themselves after their experience of domestic abuse.

### Parenting Through Domestic Abuse

An 11-week programme which helps women to understand how children are affected by domestic abuse, supports women to learn strategies to support children effectively and shows women how to build a stronger and healthier bond with their children.

### Recovery Toolkit

A 12-week programme that empowers women to recognise the psychological impact of domestic abuse.

### Crush Programme

This is a structured programme of group support and empowerment for young people of both sexes in the age range of 13-19 years old who have witnessed, experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse. It is suitable for those vulnerable to domestic abuse and those who are beginning to show signs of controlling behaviour.

## Male Abuse Recovery Support (MARS)

The service has a dedicated male support worker who is able to offer specialist support for male survivors. This is a recovery programme for men who have experienced domestic abuse. The programme explores the dynamics of domestic abuse and how men are affected by an abusive partner, former partner or family member.

The 24-hour Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Helpline Telephone **0800 980 3331**

Worcestershire Male Domestic Abuse Helpline Telephone **0800 014 9082**

Operating: **Tuesday's 11am-3pm**

Referral can be made via email **male.support@rooftopgroup.org** There is also a secure email

**male.support@rooftop.cjsm.net**

## SupportWorks Foundation

For further information please email **info@supportworksfoundation.org.uk**

Or visit their website **www.supportworksfoundation.org.uk**

Telephone **07413 943975** To make a telephone referral call **0741 394 3974**

**Services include:**

### Recovery programmes for women survivors of domestic abuse

Any woman who has completed the Freedom Programme and no longer living with the perpetrator can attend at venues in Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest, Malvern or Redditch

Freedom Program - Stourport & Redditch

### Programme for children who have witnessed domestic abuse

For Children aged 5-18 years the opportunity to talk about their experiences and break the 'secret' of abuse. They will understand they are not alone and not responsible for the abuse.

### Training for Professionals

2-day Freedom Programme for Professionals Workshop. You do **NOT** need to have attended the 1-day Freedom Course to attend.

### Prevention programmes for boys and girls aged 11-19 years of age

They provide professionals with the skills and knowledge required to successfully deliver the Coaching Healthy & Respectful Masculinity Programme (CHARM) to boys and young men aged 11-19 years and/or the girls' programme We are Valued, Equal and Safe (WAVES) to girls aged 11-19 years of age.

## SandyCroft Centre

Visit their website **www.sandycroft.org**

Email **info@sandycroft.org**

Telephone **01527 595135**

The Sandycroft Centre, based in Redditch offers support to women and includes 1:1 individual sessions, weekly groups, Counselling and Wellbeing Services to help deal with Domestic Abuse. They work in partnership to deliver the Freedom Programme and Freedom beyond 1 & 2 and offer CRUSH for young people affected by Domestic Abuse as well as encourage Peer mentors to help support women new to the service.

## West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Telephone **01905 724514**. This service offers telephone support and information for male and female survivors, their carers and supporters, as well as to professionals seeking information.

Website **www.wmrsasc.org.uk**

West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) is a free, confidential and non-judgemental support service for survivors of any form of rape or sexual abuse aged 5+. Whilst WMRSASC encourages individuals to self-refer, we also accept referrals from other agencies or representatives if this makes it easier for individuals to access our services. WMRSASC offers a comprehensive training package to professionals working with survivors of sexual abuse. Training can be tailored to meet the specific needs of an agency or individual.

### Counselling

Email (counselling@wrsasc.org.uk)

They offer counselling to female survivors. Counselling may be long or short term depending on the individual's needs. All clients aged 5 and over can access this service whether they are a survivor themselves or are a relative or partner of a survivor.

**www.worcestershire.gov.uk/domesticabuse**

**Helpline: 0800 980 3331**

## **Cranstoun Worcestershire - Alcohol and Drug recovery service**

Telephone **0300 303 8200**

Email referrals to **cranstounworcsreferrals@cranstoun.org.uk**

Secure email for partners: **cranstounworcsreferrals@cranstoun.org.uk.cjism.net**

### **Here4YOUth Worcestershire**

Is a young person's alcohol and drug service for anyone up to the age of 18 living in Worcestershire? You don't have to come to the service – we can meet you at home, at school, or college – wherever you feel most comfortable, and at a time that is good for you. They offer advice, support and guidance for children, young people and family members to cope with someone else's drug or alcohol misuse as part of the Here4YOUth Worcestershire Family Support Service.

**Website <https://www.cranstoun.org/services/young-people/here4youth-worcestershire/>**

### **Adult alcohol & drug recovery service**

They have a central hub in Worcester and deliver interventions across all six districts, including via their shared care scheme and community outreach locations. The website

<https://www.cranstoun.org/services/substance-misuse/cranstoun-worcestershire/> provides details of the Worcester hub. When you refer into the service, they will identify the closest location to you for help and support.

### **Dawn**

Telephone **07713 200699**

Email **dawn@worcestercommunitytrust.org.uk**

Dawn is a free, confidential, and non-judgemental tailored service for women who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. They support women at all stages of abusive relationships, whether or not they are still living with a perpetrator. Women can refer themselves. They provide a service tailored to the needs of each woman, with an emphasis on individual face to face support.

# Asking the question

## Routine Enquiry



It's acknowledged that routinely asking the question around domestic abuse for professionals can be challenging and sometimes uncomfortable. But we know that it saves lives and although it may feel awkward and take us out of our comfort zone, lessons learnt tell us that, many silent victims are just waiting to be asked, in the hope of sharing their secret to access help and support. Victims are sworn to secrecy by the actions and consequences of their abuser. It's vitally important that we give victims the opportunity to share this secret by asking the question.

There is a strong likelihood that a person living in fear of domestic abuse may consider that the problem is their fault; that nobody will believe them; they may be too frightened to tell, may not understand that

domestic abuse is more than physical violence and not perceive that they are in fact a victim or may continue to minimize or underestimate the risks to them and/or their child(ren).

An important aspect of asking the question is that staff recognise the legitimacy of their role in asking and are confident and competent in offering supportive responses, hence the importance of training, support and supervision for all staff. It should be emphasised that the person may not answer the question on the first occasion and it is vitally important to ask the question on future occasions. It takes tremendous courage to acknowledge that abuse is taking place and ask for help. We know that asking the question can save lives.

The role of the professional is not to be the specialist but to signpost victims to specialist services and provide resources providing information and support. It's important to understand that the victim is best placed to know when to make these calls and how to manage their safety on a day to day basis. Enquiry should be made in private on a one-to-one basis in an environment where the person feels safe, and in a kind, sensitive manner.

Listed below are some examples of questions you might ask.

### Initial questions:

- How are things at home?
- Do you feel safe?
- How are you feeling?
- Are you getting the support you need at home?

**Follow up** – here are some possible follow-on questions that may help you to develop a discussion following a disclosure of abuse. Remember that it is important to allow the victim to take things at their own pace.

- Do you ever feel frightened of your partner?
- Does your partner ever treat you badly such as shout at you, constantly call you names, push you around or threaten you?
- We all have rows at home occasionally. What happens when you and your partner fight or disagree?
- Has your partner ever: Forced sex on you, withheld sex or made you have sex in a way that you are unhappy with?
- Does your partner get jealous and if so, how does he/she then act?
- Are there consequences if you don't do something? Are you afraid of what may happen? (what will happen?)

**Golden Principles: Listen – Believe – Empathy – Define Abuse – Act to Protect – Reassure – Signpost – Be Professionally Curious**



## The impact on Children

Children can often be the forgotten witnesses and victims of domestic abuse and violence and are considered to be passive in the home situation. Parents can have an over optimistic view that their child does not know about the abuse, thinking the children have not been exposed to it. Sadly, this can also be an issue for professionals talking to parents. Prolonged or regular exposure to domestic violence and abuse can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional well-being, despite the best efforts of the victim parent to protect the child.

Children and young people who live in families where domestic abuse occurs are likely to have an awareness of it, despite the fact that they may not be physically present in the room when the incident occurs. Children may be greatly distressed by witnessing and hearing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent, even if the children are young or unborn. There may be serious developmental effects on children who witness domestic abuse, which can result in behavioural issues, low self-esteem, depression, absenteeism, ill health, bullying, antisocial or criminal behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm and psychosocial impacts. Practitioners who work with adolescents are increasingly finding evidence of domestic abuse in intimate relationships between young people themselves.

The risks to unborn babies should always be considered if domestic abuse is suspected. It is a shocking statistic that 30% of domestic abuse starts during pregnancy. Therefore, pregnant women are particularly susceptible to being victims of domestic abuse and practitioners working with pregnant women should be alert to this possibility.

Children and young people can 'witness domestic violence/abuse in a variety of ways.

- they may be in the same room and may even get caught in the middle of an incident in an effort to make the violence stop
- they may be in the room next door and hear the abuse or see their parent's physical injuries following an incident of violence
- they may be forced to stay in one room or may not be allowed to play
- they may in their bedroom and/or woken to hear shouting or crying or hearing a parent in great distress and too scared to react.
- they may be forced to witness sexual abuse or they may be forced to take part in verbally abusing the victim

When responding to incidents, the agency in question should always find out if there are any children in the household. The Police/agency should see any children present in the household to assess their immediate safety and ascertain the whereabouts of any child normally resident in the household. The voice of the child is vitally important; they should not be invisible to professionals.

The agency responding needs to consider what support, services and safeguarding are needed for the family, focusing on the needs of the child. If you are worried about a child you can call the Family Front Door on 01905 822666.

If there are safeguarding concerns and you feel the threshold is met for Children's Social Care Services, you can submit a cause for concern notification which can be found on the Worcestershire Children's First website

[https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20641/are\\_you\\_a\\_professional\\_and\\_worried\\_about\\_child](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20641/are_you_a_professional_and_worried_about_child)

If you want to refer a child or young person to Children's social care in an emergency, please contact the **Family Front Door**

Staff are available Monday to Thursday from 9.00am to 5.00pm and Fridays from 9.00am to 4.30pm.

Telephone **01905 822666**

For assistance out of office hours (weekdays and all day at weekends and bank holidays):

Telephone **01905 768020**

## Protective Orders

If you are or have been the victim of domestic abuse, you can apply to the Court for an 'injunction'. (The below orders are taken out independent of the police) These include:

### Non-Molestation Order

Is aimed at preventing your partner or ex-partner from using or threatening violence against you or your child, or intimidating, harassing or pestering you, in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of yourself and your children.

\*The police have a power to arrest on an alleged breach of a non-molestation order.

### Occupation Order

Regulates who can live in the family home and can also restrict your abuser from entering the surrounding area. If you do not feel safe continuing to live with your partner, or if you have left home because of violence, but want to return and exclude your abuser, you may want to apply for an occupation order.

\*A power of arrest can be attached.

\*Non-molestation and occupation orders are only available if you are being abused by an 'associated person' such as a spouse, cohabitee, someone you have had an intimate relationship with or a family member.

If your abuser is not an associated person you may be able to obtain an injunction under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

### Family Court Orders

If parents cannot reach an agreement on child arrangements, it may be necessary to ask the court to assist. A court can make a variety of orders including:

1. A Child Arrangements Order is an order settling arrangements about where a child should live or what time they should spend with each parent and contact arrangements.

\*No power of arrest attached. You would need to make an Application for an Enforcement Order in the event of a breach.

2. A Prohibited Steps Order is an order which prevents a certain action. Generally, these orders are used to stop a child being removed from a particular parent's care, removal from their school or preventing their removal from the jurisdiction (England and Wales).

\*No power of arrest attached though police may assist informally. Enforceable in the County Court as contempt of court.

3. A Specific Issue Order means an order giving directions for the purpose of determining a specific question. These can solve disputes relating to many issues for example change of name, religious upbringing or permission to take a child out of the jurisdiction for a holiday.

\*No power of arrest but enforced by order of the court.

To find out more visit the following websites

**Womensaid** - <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/getting-an-injunction/>

**Cafcass** - <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/professionals/private-law-cases/>

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

**Helpline: 0800 980 3331**