

# Domestic Abuse

How to spot the signs of domestic abuse and get help for someone who may be suffering



Hinckley & Bosworth  
Borough Council

Access information from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's

**Domestic Abuse Outreach Service**

tel **01455 255746** or **07966 202181**



**Domestic abuse happens every day,  
people may be aware of it but don't  
know what to do about it**

**Watch out for signs**

**Ask them if they are okay**

**Don't ignore it**

**Do something...**



**Contact us:**

**01455 255746 or**

**07966 202181**

## Domestic abuse is:

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 include, 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 dependent by isolating them from their source 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 a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

**This is the Government definition.**

**It includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.**



# How will I recognise it?

## Domestic abuse can involve:

- **Physical abuse** – violence such as punching, kicking, biting, choking, spitting, slapping and throwing objects. You may notice or be shown marks or bruises. Or a person may change their clothing or use make-up to disguise an injury.
- **Emotional abuse** – constant criticism, threats to individual or their family, putting them down publicly, accusing them lying, sulking, cheating, verbal abuse and name calling. This may lead to changes in behaviour, someone being withdrawn or tearful. They may suffer from lack of sleep or become angry or irritable. They may start to drink heavily, use drugs or develop eating disorders.
- **Sexual abuse** – sex against their will or in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or humiliated. Sexual abuse is likely to affect someone's behaviour in similar way to emotional abuse; they may also contract a sexually transmitted disease/s or have an unwanted pregnancy.
- **Financial abuse** – not allowing them to have money, spending food money, running up debts in their name. You may notice that someone is unable to pay bills or pay for treats and activities. They may ask to borrow money. There may be little food in the house or they or their children may be hungry.





- **Coercive and controlling behaviour** – making them do things they don't want to do or stopping them from doing things. Isolating them from friends and family, monitoring or blocking phone calls or use of social media. Preventing them from attending appointments. You may notice they are making excuses not to come.
- **Forced marriage** – and so called 'honour' based violence – making them marry someone against their will, bullying them and controlling their behaviour to protect the family's reputation. Family objections to the person's choice of partner or sexuality. They may not be allowed out, leading to isolation from friends, work or education.
- **Stalking and harassment** – obsessive jealousy, following and checking up on them, embarrassing them in public or on social media. They may be worried about being followed, anxious about going to certain places or being seen somewhere.
- **Denial** – abusers will sometimes deny their actions or suggest it was the other person's fault. They may beg for forgiveness and say it will never happen again. The person may think they have exaggerated the abuse and that it wasn't serious. They may play down the abuser's behaviour or accept their excuses.

# What are the signs of high risk domestic abuse?

High Risk Domestic Abuse means we think that someone is at high risk of serious harm or homicide. Serious harm is: A risk that is life threatening and/ or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.

## Warning signs include:

- Threats to kill
- Use of weapons (including household objects)
- Strangulation or smothering
- Sexual assault, rape or threat of sexual exploitation
- High level of stalking and harassment
- High level of controlling behaviour
- The abuser having suicidal intent or serious mental health issues
- Threat of forced marriage or so called 'honour' based violence, because the person is accused of bringing shame on the family
- A criminal history or history of domestic abuse in this relationship or previous ones
- And pregnancy or having a very young child – can increase vulnerability

HOWEVER, THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE

You should listen to what the individual at risk tells you, how frightened they are and what they think the alleged abuser is likely to do.





## **Finally be aware that...**

**Someone you know may see you as a person they trust and tell you about the abuse they are suffering or you may notice signs of abuse.**

**It's not your responsibility to decide if the abuse has happened or not, only to make sure that support is offered and/or ensure the appropriate referrals are made if you think the abuse is high risk or there are children or vulnerable adults at risk.**

**Always listen carefully, take their allegations seriously and act on them.**

**Be aware that domestic abuse victims can underplay the risk to themselves and others.**

# What to do if someone you know is experiencing Domestic Abuse

